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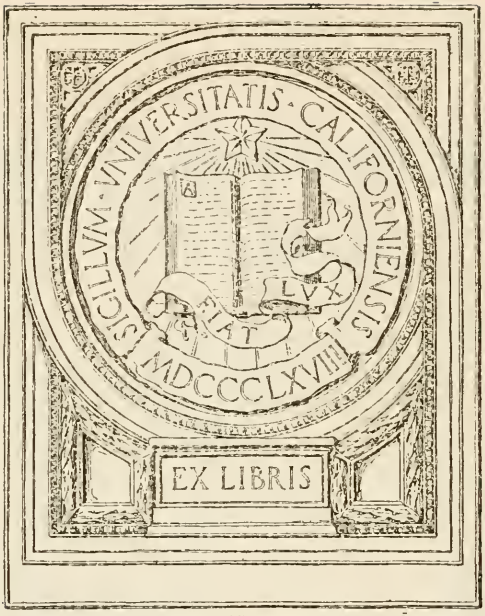
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# MORGAN ROBERTSON
# THE MAN

Juan J. Santly
Suisun City,
Calif U.S.A.

Jan. 29

Morgan R. Patterson.

# MORGAN ROBERTSON
# THE MAN

PUBLISHED BY
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## PREFACE

This is a little book about a big man. Within the past year thousands have come to know Morgan Robertson's stories. Old admirers have renewed the charm of his work in a new and more befitting dress than the fleeting pages of a magazine. For these old and new friends this book was published, in the hope that it would warm you to a man who gave you many enjoyable hours. Not one side of his complex personality was spared. In this book is Morgan Robertson with all his weaknesses and foibles and all the other things, too, that made him a big man and a good friend.

THE EDITOR.

434885

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From personal experience I have learned two things—the rapaciousness of mother-in-laws and the self-centeredness of professional writers are two things that exist only in comic (*sic*) papers. As the country man said of the camel, " they ain't no sich animal " in real life.

It has been my pleasurable experience to see a dream realized—to see the genius of Morgan Robertson recognized by his countrymen and to see his widow benefit from that recognition. In no small measure was this success reached by the hearty and willing commendations publicly made by some of the biggest men in Morgan Robertson's craft. They knew the depth of Morgan Robertson's genius. They invited the reading public to sit in and enjoy the good things they had tasted. For Morgan Robertson and for every new reader of his stories I acknowledge his and their thanks to

Booth Tarkington
Robert W. Chambers
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Arthur T. Vance

It would be amiss not to mention here the following publishing houses who graciously surrendered their book rights to Morgan Robertson in this effort:

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J. B. K.

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# MORGAN ROBERTSON
# THE MAN

# MORGAN ROBERTSON, SHIPMATE

*One of the original subscribers to the first edition of Morgan Robertson's books was an American Consular Agent in Japan. With his subscription he sent a letter mentioning that thirty years ago Morgan Robertson and he were shipmates. Scenting an interesting story, we invited the writer to tell Morgan Robertson's admirers of the voyage and what he remembered of Morgan Robertson, then a young sailor. This interesting article was the answer. At the request of the author his name is withheld.*

MORGAN ROBERTSON and myself were shipmates in the American ship *Sunrise*, Captain Clark, in the early eighties, from New York for Hongkong. You will find part of this voyage described in "Masters of Men," although for purposes of his own Morgan Robertson has advanced the time some sixteen or seventeen years, also worked in two naval people. The tragedy of the carpenter and the cook actually occurred and is not a bit overdrawn, and is only one of the many incidents that occurred on this voyage. I disagree with him in one thing only, and that is the food. The food on this vessel was really good. The skipper was the hardest proposition that ever went captain of an American merchant vessel. The mates—of whom more, farther on—were two of the greatest brutes unhung.

I was only sixteen years old at the time. Morgan Robertson was about twenty-three or twenty-four, as near as I can recollect. He was a good sailor, and was picked for one of the quartermasters when the ship left New York.

It was my first voyage to sea. A young Irish boy from Brooklyn—Jimmy Riley—and myself joined the ship about a week before she sailed. We loaded case oil on the South Brooklyn side of the river, and on completion of the loading dropped down to Staten Island, one cold winter's day, and anchored. The crew came on board early the next morning, Morgan Robertson with them, and my attention was first drawn to him by the fact that he was one of the few that were sober and ready to turn to. There was only one other American besides him in the crew, a man named Daly, whose picture is very well drawn in the *Sawyer*, in "Masters of Men." Two minutes after the crew had come aboard I thought Hell had broken loose. The mates pitched into them and, by hammering them that could stand, and playing the hose on those that were unable to do so, in about twenty minutes they had that crew in shape to turn to. The first mate was a Down Easter, named Colson; the second mate was an Irishman, named Nolan. He came from Belfast, but hailed from Paris, Kentucky, although he had never been there and only had a hazy notion as to where it was. His reason for hailing from Paris, Kentucky, was that every Dutchman that came over hailed from New York, and he wanted to hail from somewhere else. They were

two brutes; also, probably as fine specimens of seamen as you would find anywhere.

Although that morning there was not a sail bent, three topgallant masts housed, jib-boom rigged in, all the heavy stores around the deck because there had been no time to stow them below, and most of the crew more or less helpless on account of their recent debauch on shore; nevertheless at four o'clock in the afternoon we were towing down the bay bound for Hongkong. I did not appreciate this feat of seamanship at the time, but I did so in later years.

The crew were the usual collection and conglomeration of foreigners that gathered in the forecastles of American ships thirty years ago. Riley and myself lived in the boys' room in the after end of the forward house. Probably because it was more congenial, both Morgan Robertson and Daly spent much of their spare time in the dog-watches with us. Morgan Robertson was called " Shorty " and " Bib " on board. He was a good, smart sailor and, as already stated, the captain picked him for one of the quartermasters before we got to Sandy Hook. He was in the mate's watch, while I was in the second mate's. He was a good " yarner," and I can still remember many of his stories, some of which I can even now recognize worked into various stories. He also, at times, recited poetry. I recollect one poem, about an old New Jersey deacon, who after his death reached the gates of Heaven, and, being impressed with his own importance, demanded admission as follows:

"Open wide the gates of Heaven, Uncle Gabriel blow your horn;
Here comes one with sins forgiven, here comes one that's newly born."

However, the gates are not thrown open, and after a long time St. Peter opens the little window and asks the cause of all the disturbance. The deacon again demands admission, although he has shrunk considerably in size. St. Peter then reminds him of all the mean things that he has done and forgotten, and gradually the deacon gets smaller and smaller, and is about to take the road to down below, when St. Peter takes pity on him and opens the gate the fraction of an inch, through which the deacon just manages to squeeze.

I do not know whether this poem was original with "Shorty," or whether he read it somewhere and memorized it. I have often wished that I could get the whole of this poem again.

However, as a rule we were too tired to do much more than lie around and talk in the dog-watch. The *Sunrise* was a hard ship. There was no afternoon watch below and very often no morning watch either, which meant that if you got an average of six hours sleep out of the twenty-four you were lucky. Also, there were no opportunities for a quiet "calk" on deck in the night time. The watch were kept on their feet at the break of the poop, while we boys—one of us in each watch—were kept on the lee side of the poop under still closer supervision. Riley and myself

were the only ones of the crew forward who made the voyage. The rest of the crew, "Shorty" among them, were either paid off or ran away in Hongkong. I saw him but once afterwards and that was in 1889, in New York, at which time he told me that he was second mate of a barquentine, bound on a voyage to Matanzas, Cuba.

I left New York in 1891, and did not return there until 1913. In the meantime I had read a number of his books, the first one published by Harpers years ago. It was not, however, until I read "Masters of Men" that I recognized my old shipmate. I always thought of writing and getting into touch with him, but sailorlike kept putting it off. Two years ago I came home to New York on a visit, the first in twenty-two years. I thought of making inquiries, but there was so much to see—so much that had changed—that it kept me busy for a month, at the end of which time I was suddenly recalled by a cable.

When I saw your announcement last February, I wrote you for his address, which you kindly sent me, but almost immediately after I noticed the account of his death in the New York *Times*.

# GATHERING NO MOSS

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*This is Morgan Robertson's life story, as he wrote it himself. Published in the "Saturday Evening Post," it attracted attention all over the country. Booth Tarkington considered it one of the best things Morgan Robertson ever did. The publication of this remarkable document was the inspiration for the plan launched a few months later by the "Metropolitan" and "McClure's" to give Morgan Robertson the recognition and reward that had been so long denied him.*

I PUT in ten years at sea before the mast. Ten more years I served as a diamond-setter. I have been an inventor. In addition to this I have written more than two hundred short stories. My name has appeared as author of stories in every leading magazine in the United States and frequently in the English periodicals. The editor will recall that nineteen of my stories appeared in this publication—a fact I cite to prove that my literary work reached a pretty good standard of quality.

I have had published fourteen books, none of which retailed for less than a dollar. I frequently go into public libraries and see my fourteen volumes strung out in a row. I go to these libraries for books because I have not enough money to buy one. I am

broke! I am the rolling stone that gathered no moss.

I am not a spendthrift—never have been one. I have never lived expensively—have never been able to. The only dress suit I have ever owned I still have. I never wear it nowadays, because I have not the things to go with it. In other words, I cannot live up to it. I am simply improvident—a poor business man. I have never made five thousand dollars in a single year.

I still write, but I have trouble in selling. I fear that I am a sponge squeezed dry.

I did not begin to write until I was thirty-six years old, and that was a long time ago. I began then—as I have begun everything—because I needed the money. After many years of what my friends are pleased to call a successful literary career I am in the same fix as when I started. As a literary rolling stone it is likely I have gained some polish, but just enough to make me feel the lack of the moss. That, I fear, I shall never have.

The responsibility for my having been an author is shared by two men—a newspaper reporter and Rudyard Kipling. The former suggested to me that, as I had been a sailor, I might be interested in a sea story written by the latter. He handed me a copy of a magazine containing Kipling's story and urged me to read it. While riding home on an elevated train in New York, after having spent one nickel of my last quarter, I did so.

Up to that time I had never read much fiction and

became intensely interested, noting with impatience in one or two instances where the author had made slight mistakes in naming certain parts of a ship's rigging. But that story inspired me. I was out of a job because the failure of my eyes had forced me to give up my work as a diamond-setter.

"If a man who has never worked at sea can write a story like that"—I could tell from certain phraseology that he had never been a sailor—"and get money for it," I thought, "why couldn't I, a man of actual experience, write one?"

On my walk from the train to my little flat on Washington Heights, where a frugal dinner of corned beef and cabbage awaited me, I thought of nothing but Kipling's story. It fascinated me. It was the first story I had ever read without a love affair in it.

Maybe, I thought, here is the chance for escape from the hardships of tramping from place to place, looking for a job.

As I neared home an idea came to me for a story of my own. It was suggested by Kipling's, it is true, but it was not an imitation. His was a story of strong men up against a problem of life or death, fighting it out. My story was of a tramp, a good-for-nothing Jack-of-all-trades and master of none, who, caught on an icebound and dismasted barge in a winter storm on Lake Erie, rigged a jury foremast and sailed her into Buffalo. I had spent many years as a sailor on the Great Lakes and knew the atmosphere.

At dinner I was so absorbed in my new thought

that I answered my wife in monosyllables and actually bolted my food—so anxious was I to get at my story.

While my wife was clearing off the table I went into the kitchen and, using the covered washtubs for a desk, began to write with the stub of a pencil on the backs of a stack of circulars I was to have distributed. On and on through the night I wrote until I had finished the story of eight thousand words just before daylight. Long before that my wife had gone to bed and left me to my new whim, as she regarded it. I slept but two or three hours and then did not rest well, so impatient was I to get downtown with my story.

At noon I hunted up my newspaper friend and told him what I had done. He granted me the use of his typewriter for transcribing. Up to that time I had never had my hands on a typewriting machine, but I was determined. In two days I painfully picked out a transcription of my story, which naturally was ragged with errors and misplaced letters. I did not aspire to the magazines then, but took my painfully typed story to a newspaper syndicate, the editor of which received me most courteously. He assured me if I could suit him he would pay as high as two cents a word. Two cents a word! That meant one hundred and sixty dollars!

I went home glorified and waited a week—two weeks—three weeks; and then I called on the editor of the syndicate. He had forgotten me, but said if I had left a story with him I should hear about it through the mails. I waited another week, while the

butcher, the grocer, the landlord, and the wolf assailed my door—then called again on the editor. He glared at me while informing me that my story would receive due attention, and again said that I should hear from him through the mails. I waited two more weeks and called again.

"Here I am!" I announced. "And I want to know whether or not you want my story."

Unconsciously I was talking like a sailor. He looked up from his desk as though I had insulted him, then let out a roar. He would have made a good second mate, that editor; he was big and strong and self-confident.

"Albert!" he called in a voice that would have reached from the poop-deck to the foretopgallant-yard. "Drop whatever you are doing and get this—gentleman—his story. And give it to him. Hear me? Give it to him!"

"Yes, sir," answered Albert, then a young stenographer but now a successful banker; and he ran down the long line of desks while I paced up and down, with a tingling at the roots of my hair. Then Albert came back.

"What is the name of the story?" he asked.

"The Destruction of the Unfit," I answered in as loud a voice as my lungs and anger would give me. "And my name is——"

"Hold on!" interrupted the big editor, rising to his feet. "Did you write that story—'The Destruction of the Unfit'?"

"I did."

"Sit down, sir," he said more kindly. "I beg your pardon. I do recognize you now, but I had lost remembrance of you in the rush of business here. I remember your giving me that story and I assure you I gave it a prompt reading. Though I recognized its worth at the first page I knew it was too long for my syndicate and sent it back to the editor of the magazine." He explained to me that the syndicate and one of the big magazines were operated under the same general management. "It must be there yet," he said. "Just sit here and I'll get track of it." So I sat while Albert resumed his work, and that big editor spent half an hour hunting up my story. At last he appeared.

"Your story has received the approval of every member of the editorial staff except the editor-in-chief," he said; "and his objection is that it violates all the rules of fiction writing."

I asked him whether he had read it through and he said he had. I then asked him why he had read it and his reply was:

"Because I wanted to know how it came out."

"Isn't that all you want in a story?" I asked, unable to understand the fine points of the writing game. He gave me no satisfactory answer.

"But"—and the big man clapped me on the back—"your story will go. Just wait! A story that an editor will read to the end usually has a chance."

I went home more glorified than ever. Was it possible, I asked of myself, that I was to become an author? Could I teach, preach, tell my fellow-men

what I knew, and sign my name in print? I could hardly believe it; yet, if so, a wonderful career had opened up for me—a career full of effort and endeavor, of honor, of esteem, of position and acclaim—a career in which work was no longer an expenditure of energy to be followed by bodily fatigue. Work was to be a delight, a pleasure, a fruition. And in this frame of mind, with empty pockets and an empty stomach, I met that big editor a few days later on the street.

"Come in here," he said, "and have a drink with me. I want to tell you something." I followed him in, and across a round table we talked.

"You are up against the hardest game a human being ever tackled," he began. "Statistics have been compiled which show that tons of ink, tons of paper, and miles of typewriter ribbons are wasted each year by would-be writers—for nothing. You have written one good story and it will probably be accepted; but you have wasted nearly two months in the effort. Is it worth while? Can you keep it up? I can't, and I have been writing with more or less success for thirty years.

"Now, as I understand it, you want to make a living. You need money and to get it you are willing to work. Well, strike out! Make out a list of business houses that might give you work and go the rounds every day. Present yourself again and again to the business heads and repeat the formula: 'I want work.' I assure you that in a week's time you'll get it."

I was impressed and was about to follow his advice when the magazine accepted my story on condition that I take twenty-five dollars as remuneration and rewrite it so as to eliminate some of the expressions which, in the editor's opinion, were too technical for the average reader. I accepted, and forgot the other editor's advice in my increased glorification.

I saw no more of that editor for a year, when—again with empty pockets and an empty stomach, but with nineteen or twenty stories to my credit in good magazines—I met him accidentally. He again invited me into a café.

"I am going to drink this one," he said as he raised his glass, "to a fellow who has won. I had no faith in you, for I had seen too many make the same start and drop off; but you are a winner. I know it! Never mind if you are not getting the money." He had surely noticed my shabby apparel. "You'll get it. You've got me beaten and I congratulate you. I've read your stuff and I am mighty proud that I was the first editor to approve it. Here's how!"

Through the long years when an occasional spell of glorification was sandwiched in between the poverty and hardships, I have been upheld by that man's good opinion of me more than by ambition, pride, or necessity. He is dead now—dropped in the street; but his influence on my mind is still with me. Had I not met him I should not be writing this story.

However, when the big editor said, "Never mind, you'll get the money!" he was wrong. I have made some, it is true; but I have never been able to have

enough ahead at any one time to live comfortably and without worry.

My first story—the one for which I received twenty-five dollars—received considerable attention at the time and is now printed in one of my books. Its appearance in a leading magazine made it easier for me to see the editors and also enabled me to get my future stories read more quickly.

When I went home with that first twenty-five dollars my wife naturally was delighted. She saw a future pride in telling people that her husband was an author. It relieved her of having to explain that I had been a sailor and a diamond-setter, but that I was temporarily out of employment.

The money did not go far, however. We owed the butcher and the grocer more than that, and were hard pressed by the landlord besides. No matter how well I succeeded, somehow I seem always to have been pressed by landlords. Still, the money was a temporary relief and, feeling encouraged, I set to work with a vim and soon turned out another sea yarn. For this one I received forty dollars, and the editor urged me to write more.

Understand you, I was not an educated man and knew little about the rules of English. I had never heard of what is known as style in writing. My work was always laborious. I would get an idea for a plot and would then proceed to put it down in painful style, a paragraph at a time. Unlike most writers, I rarely ever rewrote my stories.

My vocabulary was very limited and frequently I

had to look through the dictionaries for the proper word to express myself.

I used to marvel at my newspaper friend, who could sit down at a typewriter and reel off copy by the yard. He never had to hesitate for a word. By instinct, it seemed, he knew how to punctuate.

"It must be great to be able to do that," I said to him one day. "Think of how I have to pore over my words!"

"Yes," he replied, "it does come easy; but you also want to remember that I couldn't write a short story to save my life. I guess I'm too free with my language." I know now that he was.

At the end of my first year of writing I sat down with my wife one night and decided to take stock. I had written something like twenty stories, which later proved to be the cream of all my efforts. For these I had received an average price of forty-five dollars. My year's work had netted me about a thousand dollars—about twenty dollars a week.

To some that may appear better than working as a sailor or even as a diamond-setter. I know thousands of good men support families on much less than that; but of those thousands few are authors who have to live in New York. I assure you that living the life of a writer is much more expensive than following the daily walks of a sailor or a diamond-setter.

As my name began to appear frequently I had to meet other writers. To be successful at anything one must be in the atmosphere of the thing he is doing. To have a talk with another writer or two usually

cost me a dollar. If I did that every day—my average was easily one dollar—it can be seen that three hundred and sixty-five of my thousand dollars went toward social talks with other authors.

Right away I expect someone to say: "That only goes to show the curse of drink!" But I should like someone to tell me how an individual in search of companionship can upset the customs of his fellowmen singlehanded! I could not if I had wanted to; and, besides, I had no such inclination. If a fellow-writer, meeting me on the street, slapped me on the shoulder and invited me into a café I went—not because I particularly wanted a drink but because I wanted to talk and hear others talk. I needed companionship of that kind. If I remained any length of time I had to extend a drink invitation—and drinks cost money.

It is not my purpose to discuss the drink question. I think that was pretty well explained in a recent story by Jack London. I am merely attempting to explain why a writer's life is necessarily more expensive than that of the average man in less prominent walks of life. Remember, also, that I had been a sailor and had the seaman's love for sociability.

My wife and I went over all this and understood it. My literary success had been gratifying to both of us; but the butcher, the grocer, the landlord, and the wolf were still waiting outside. In a year they had not budged an inch. And up to that time I had not encountered tailors. That was a new cloud, which was to come. It came quickly. One of the crosses

of my career up to that time was a household duty requiring me to take a big collie dog out for a walk twice a day. I never liked dogs, though I am fond of cats; and that collie became one of the dark spots in my life. Not only did I hate to be seen walking with the dog, but a more serious worry arose.

On account of having to see editors I had discovered that my personal appearance was important. I had but one suit of clothes—a blue one—and during the shedding period, or whatever it is called, the reddish hairs from that collie would get on my blue suit and stay there, no matter how much I brushed it.

"Something has got to be done about that collie!" I said to my wife after we had figured up for the first year of writing. "My clothes are never in condition for me to call on an editor."

My wife would not listen to anything that might cause gloom in the life of the collie; and as that dog was her main joy I had to bear my burden and submit to the continued daily walks.

"Why don't you buy a new suit?" she asked. "I think we can save up enough."

At the outset I told you I had been an inventor, and it was now up to me to exercise inventive powers; but under an electric light inventive genius often goes wrong, as I will explain.

It suddenly occurred to me that if I got a brown suit of clothes—the same shade as the collie—the loosened hairs that fell on me would be unnoticed.

On a credit basis I put this idea into execution; but imagine my chagrin when I discovered that under

the electric light of the cheap clothing store I had picked the wrong shade! The flying hairs made my apparel look more shabby than ever!

This was no joking matter with me. I was deadly serious; but when I spoke of it to a fellow short-story writer I thought he would go into convulsions of laughter. I became angry and left him. The next time I met him he started to smile, but seeing the frown coming on my face he apologized for having laughed at my misfortune. He was a humorist. I was not.

"Can you explain to me," I asked him, "why it is that most of our mirth comes from seeing someone suffer?"

"But that is funny, you know—that suit being bought to match the dog!" he insisted.

"Maybe so," I agreed; "but will you tell me how I am going to get another suit? Is that funny?" He lent me the money.

Soon after the misfortune of the collie and the brown suit I was invited to a formal dinner. I knew it would be of advantage for me to be present, but this would entail the expense of a dress suit and a high hat. It was impossible for me to stretch my credit that far. There was but one thing left to do —write a story.

In that story I became unconsciously a humorist—at least some of the critics were kind enough to refer to me as one. Really, though, I had no idea of causing laughter when I first began to devise the plot. The question of clothes had suggested it to me.

I had been reading a scientific work on the manufacture and composition of explosives. Always I have made it a point to study those things thoroughly, and when I had finished the book I was pretty familiar with the various stages in the preparation of guncotton. I wrote the story, pointing out scientifically how a sailor on a battleship accidentally sat in an acid mixture, which was being used in making explosives, and discolored his duck trousers.

By trying to whiten them with alcohol and powdered chalk he had unwittingly turned the spot into guncotton. He had a bottle in his hip pocket, and when the boatswain struck him with a board an explosion followed that blew off the troublesome part of the trousers at a most embarrassing moment.

That story caused a laugh, notwithstanding my serious efforts to be scientific; and I received sixty dollars for it—received it in time to purchase the dress suit and high hat for the dinner.

At that gathering I met more entertaining men than I had ever seen before. It inspired me—gave me new life. I should have gone home thoroughly happy but for an unfortunate incident that somewhat marred my night.

Did you ever see a sailor in a dress suit and a high hat? I realize that I must have looked funny. I am short of stature and still have every earmark of the man before the mast. At any rate, one of the other guests became unduly and uncontrollably amused by my appearance. As we walked through the lobby of the hotel he asked to be introduced to me.

When I turned to speak to him he slapped me on top of the high hat and shoved it down over my ears. Though I knew it was a case of too much wine, this was too much for a man with the instinct of a second mate. I landed a blow on his jaw that knocked him half across the room. Friends interceded and he finally apologized—still maintaining, however, that I looked funny. In later years he and I became close friends.

As a literary man I was progressing nicely at this time, but I still had trouble keeping in ready money. At that dinner several men of note told me that I was a coming man. They had read my stories and had liked them. In a way I guess that was true. If some of them had not noticed my work I should not have been invited to the dinner.

When I reached home after the banquet I was flat broke. The dress suit and the few incidentals had absolutely cleaned me out of funds. When I say cleaned out I mean exactly that. I did not have a nickel. The next day I had to walk downtown from One Hundred and Fifty-first Street to Twenty-third Street. Moreover, I was too proud or thin-skinned to borrow—and I walked back!

Soon after that my wife, who is a frail little woman, fell ill. I knew how to cook—thanks to my training as a sailor—and we had enough groceries on hand for several meals; but the clothes had to be washed. It was impossible for my wife to do this and there was not enough money on hand to have it done; so I

shoved aside the few pages of an unfinished story and undertook the job.

I was not thoroughly familiar with the workings of a washboard and at the end of an hour my knuckles were bleeding from having rubbed against the zinc corrugations—but I had half of the clothes washed. After hanging them out to dry I again started on my long walk downtown. I was desperate and determined to get some money even if I had to get down on my knees and beg it. Being already tired from doing the washing, this was the most fatiguing jaunt of all. From One Hundred and Fifty-first Street to Twenty-third Street is about six miles.

When I finally arrived at the office of the magazine that had bought my first story the bruises on my knuckles had become quite painful, and I was footsore besides. The editor noticed my condition.

"Sit down!" he said. "You look tired and I can see you have had some kind of an accident." He was looking at my knuckles.

"It's no accident," I replied; "it's hard luck. I hurt my knuckles washing clothes and have walked here to see whether I could sell you a story and get some money in advance."

He could not believe me at first, and I was compelled to go into the details of my hardships. He was a college man who had never missed a meal in his life and was amazed to know that such conditions existed among writers.

"Would ten dollars a week help you?" he asked kindly.

"Would it help? It would be a Godsend!" I replied.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," he said—"I will put you on the payroll for ten dollars a week, provided you will give us the refusal of your stories"—that is to say, I should have to allow his magazine to have the first chance at them.

I agreed to this readily; and, for a year, I took them all to him faithfully. The ten dollars was a port in a storm. I could always count on that, no matter what happened; but, strangely enough, after that not half the stories I submitted to that editor were accepted. Many of them I took elsewhere and sold at a better price.

The best pay I had received for a story up to that time was one cent a word, and in those days payment was not made until publication. Nowadays all first-class magazines pay on acceptance. When I had a story accepted I borrowed money on the prospects—and when the check did finally come I really had nothing. My predicament was very similar to that of the poor clerk who gets into the clutches of a loan shark and can never escape.

Summer came on and I had to have another suit of clothes. Out of the proceeds of one story I managed to save enough to get a seersucker coat and trousers; but the material was bad and before I had tramped round from one office to another for two months there were fringes on the bottoms of my trousers that looked like sets of false whiskers. My coat had

wrinkled and drawn so in the back that it threatened to climb over my shoulders any minute.

A neighboring woman who had become a friend of my wife very kindly came to the rescue with a bundle of shirts and other apparel that had been left by a roving son named Thomas, who had gone West and had not been heard of for several years. I took Thomas's shirts and wore them. They were the old-fashioned kind—long-bosomed stiff ones that fastened with studs.

Thomas evidently was long, while I was short; and as the holes for the studs had worn too large, my studs, which happened to be small ones, would occasionally slip through. When I sat down the bosom would flare open. I was always apprehensive about this, and every time I took a seat in an editor's office I would grab myself across the stomach and bend the long bosom inward so as to prevent the shirt from popping open at the top. That kept me so busy I often lost the thread of the conversation.

It was in this rigging that I dropped in one day to see an editor who, I had been told, was crazy for sea stories. He wanted a story all right, but explained to me that the magazine was hard pressed for cash.

"Though we haven't much money," he said, "we can give you its equivalent in some articles that we advertise."

"What have you?" I asked with a show of interest. Understand you, I had walked down there

from home and my feet were very sore. I was willing to take anything.

The editor took from his desk drawer a printed sheet of advertised articles, and the first thing my eye fell on was the cut of a chainless bicycle. Here was a way to save walking!

"If I can have my choice," I said, "I'll take that" —pointing to the bicycle ad.

"It's a go!" he declared; and I drew from my pocket the manuscript of what has since been regarded as my best story.

I realized that I was letting it go cheap, but that chainless bicycle saved me many a long walk. I was also in style, for at that time the bicycle craze had the country in a firm grip. Broadway was alive with wheels; and mine was of fine make.

With a bicycle to ride and a story off my hands I went home very much encouraged. The weekly ten dollars served to hold off the grocer and the butcher, and I began to turn out another sea yarn. I sold it for just enough to pay up my more pressing domestic debts.

Ideas were getting scare now and I found I could not possibly write more than two stories a month. I also got to where I could not begin the writing of a new story until I had sold the last one. The anxiety and uncertainty while waiting an answer from the editor kept my mind off new plots. To make matters worse, right in the midst of one of those lapses I broke the bicycle and had not enough money to have it repaired.

Thus ended my second year in literary life. The butcher, the grocer, the landlord, and the wolf were still on the job.

In relating these trials of an author I am sticking closely to the truth, but I am not trying to convey the impression that conditions such as I faced exist to-day or that all writers had to face them then. Neither am I trying to discourage others from tackling the game.

This was fifteen years ago, and at that time the magazines were not run as they are now. Better prices are paid for fiction to-day, and the whole literary game is played in a much more businesslike manner. Even the writers are more businesslike.

If I had started out under conditions prevailing in 1914, the chances are my writings would have enabled me to live comfortably. You see, I began to reach the end of my string just as the value of stories began to increase.

Again, I do not attribute my lack of financial success altogether to conditions. Other men prospered while I failed, notwithstanding the fact that they did not gain so much recognition. One author I recall had a way of manipulating the market so as to get a good price for a very ordinary story, and when he put over a good one he would do so with such effect that it was good for three or four more—at the same price. He would also go to see an editor with money in his pocket and feel independent. Some writers are good business men and born salesmen, while others—like myself—are simply writers. With

a good business manager I might have been a successful man.

Less than a month ago a man well known in the field of letters told me that when I died he was sure someone would publish all my works in a uniform edition, and that they would have a big sale. That may or may not be true, but it is certain no one will put them on the market now.

Getting back to my narrative, however, the editor from whom I got the chainless bicycle sent for me one day and suggested that I collect my first batch of stories and have them printed in book form. This had not occurred to me before; so I set out with a new ambition. I selected the best of those I had done, got the several magazines to waive their book rights, and took them to a big publishing firm. They were promptly accepted, and in addition I got an order from that house, which also published a magazine, for a story. Things suddenly looked so bright for me that I put my whole heart in that ordered story and it brought me a hundred dollars in cash.

Though the book did not have a big sale it attracted attention, and I began to get letters from editors I had not known before. The book reviewers spoke so well of my first effort that I became unusually glorified; in fact I became vainglorious—had a swelled head!

I could not work for thinking about what I had done, and I bought drinks for those who would listen while I told it. Consequently my funds soon disappeared; but I had paid off my debts and had more

than a hundred dollars in a savings bank. I began to think of raising the price of my work, and in a way succeeded. The trouble was I could not or did not turn out the stuff. I was busier thinking about myself than about plots for new stories.

I finally settled down and wrote a story about battleships—a satire on the brains that are supposed to run them. It was about the time of the Spanish-American War, and the papers were filled with deeds of valor by the naval officers. I made the mistake of making a drunken sailor the hero of a great naval engagement—or, rather, I made the mistake of picking out the wrong nations.

My story was nothing more or less than a satire on the naval officers of my own country. I offered the story to several magazines, but they would not take it for fear of offending the public, just then in the throes of hero worship. Eventually I changed the story so as to make it a naval battle between ships of Russia and Great Britain.

That was unquestionably my best piece of descriptive work, and I sent it to a weekly publication which is now the most widely circulated periodical in the United States—it was not then. In less than a week I received a check for sixty dollars for the story. Feeling that I was entitled to more in view of the fact that I had published a book and that my name was worth something, I made the first and only stand of my career for better pay. After a long mental fight with myself I decided not to accept the check and returned it.

"I think I am entitled to more than that," I wrote; "and unless you are willing to pay me one hundred and twenty dollars, please return my manuscript." To write that letter cost me considerable effort and I awaited the reply with much anxiety.

Meantime, though I knew nothing about it in advance, a change of editors had been made, and the answer I received was from the new man. He not only agreed to my terms but wrote a cheering letter, telling me that the story was so good he would like to have many more at the same price. That gave me new life.

I was now on the floodtide of my literary career. For the first time in my life I had a year of comparative domestic comfort. It cannot be said that I was altogether happy, however. Before I had written ten stories under the new scale of prices it began to dawn on me that after every floodtide there comes an ebb.

I felt myself slipping. Ideas were growing scarcer and scarcer. In my fight against the hardships occasioned by low prices and lack of independence I had drawn too heavily on my store of creative ideas. It is said that every man has in him just so many stories, and I felt that I was nearing the end of my string.

As I have intimated before, I am not and never was a natural writer. It all came hard to me. With this chance of making more money, though, I put my nose to the grindstone and struggled on. I became

nervous and irritable. Fears came to me that I was losing my mind.

I have been a close student of psychology and mental phenomena. I know now that I was medically insane, though not legally so. Feeling this way I went to a noted professor of psychology. He had done some wonderful things by hypnotic suggestion. I believe in that.

The professor had heard of me and knew my work. He diagnosed my case as one of brain fag. There was nothing the matter with me, he said, except that I had overtaxed my brain in trying to invent too many stories. After talking a long time he advised me to keep him in mind and said he would do the same with me. At the same time he discussed with me some of the great inventions of the century. He did that with the purpose of influencing my mind in a new direction. He was trying to get my brain out of a rut.

I kept in mind what the professor had said and became much more content. He was influencing me by hypnotic suggestion. Some of my younger friends smile when I tell them this; but I know the mind of that professor, even though he was a great distance away at times, turned me into a new channel of endeavor—one that kept me from going insane.

The suggestion manifested itself in an unexpected way—it always does. I had to write another story to get a needed hundred and fifty dollars, and I went down the coast many miles to consult a naval officer, a

friend, about a new feature that had been added to a battleship. While there I was taken on board a submarine boat which happened to be at anchor in that particular bay. It was then I got the idea of my first invention—the periscope.

Now, I believe that nothing but hypnotic suggestion could have made me go down there to see an officer and then find the very thing needed to turn my thoughts into a new channel of invention. If I had gone at any other time the submarine boat would not have been there. Those things are not coincidences. Though no one has definitely located it, I firmly believe there is a law behind them. You cannot make me believe that when one man is thinking of another, and just at that moment sees him coming round a corner, it is a coincidence. It occurs too often.

When I left that boat I was actually enthusiastic. Something new was dawning on me. I even forgot about the condition of the larder at home. While in the lower part of the little boat the lieutenant in command showed me all its workings. It was a great day for me.

"The one thing we need," he said as we came up, "is an apparatus by which we can see what is going on above without having to rise to the surface."

"In other words," I added, "if you could look into a glass down below and, by a series of reflections, be able to view the surrounding surface of the water above, it would make the submarine boat the most powerful of warships."

"Exactly."

"Then I am going to invent it!" I declared; and I left him, knowing absolutely that it could be done. The mind of that professor of psychology was directing me.

At that very moment, though I did not know it, a Frenchman, seated at his desk in Paris, was innocently devising a fantastic yarn that was destined to deal me a crushing blow—a blow from which I have never recovered; one that has made me an old man, lacking energy and ambition.

The officer who explained to me the need of such an instrument as the periscope knew it would have to be composed of a series of lenses in a tube, the end of which must remain above water after the boat was submerged; but he could not discover the shape of the crystal or prism that, by refraction and reflection, would carry the image down the tube, so that it could be seen by looking through the glass at the lower end. That, in a rough way, explains the problem which was before me. An accurate scientific description would be impossible without a diagram.

In the course of my experiments it became necessary for me to make a thorough study of physics—which I had never done at school—and particularly of optics. It took me four months to master that alone.

Meantime I had to be a breadwinner and I was sorely beset to make enough money to keep my wife and myself from absolute want. I saw that, to succeed, I should have to be systematic.

I formulated a plan by which I could work one week on a story and give the next to the invention. In that way I figured I could live and, at the same time, gradually reach the goal for which I was striving.

My mind was in such a condition, however, that I could not work on the periscope while waiting for a story to be accepted. Editors were glad to get my manuscripts, but that continual waiting for acceptances was killing my chances of making a successful invention. Finally I saw the way out—at least it was worth a trial.

Bright and early one morning I called on the editor of a popular magazine, which had published several of my stories, and asked him whether he could use one every two weeks. The idea was agreeable to him.

"But where is the stuff?" he inquired.

"I haven't a story ready," I replied, "but I have one in mind. What do you think of this idea?"

I then related in detail the plot of a story—I had not thought of it until that very moment—and he said it sounded like good stuff.

"That's all right," he said. "I'll take that. Go ahead and finish it."

That, in the writing game, is known as offering a story in scenario form—in other words an outline. At my suggestion the editor gave me fifty dollars in advance, and, with the story already sold, I quickly turned it out.

Just why this idea had never occurred to me before

I do not know. It would have saved me many nights of worry.

For a whole year I did nothing but sell scenarios to that editor and work on my invention. And—what is more remarkable—I managed to make ends meet.

It was at the expiration of a year of experimenting I suddenly discovered that, in addition to other lenses, a cone-shaped glass placed in the end of the tube would do the trick of refracting the light rays as I wanted them. I was beside myself with joy. Working night and day I quickly rigged out a model, and —imagine my delight!—it worked! I had solved the problem! I had invented the periscope!

At nine o'clock the next morning I called up the submarine-boat builders and asked for the lieutenant who had talked to me a year before. It so happened he was passing through New York that day and was in the office for just an hour. I had chosen the psychological moment for calling on the telephone.

"I've got it! I've got it!" I shouted over the 'phone.

"Got what?" he asked in an irritated voice.

"The periscope!" I explained. "I've solved the problem."

He told me to hurry to the office as quickly as I could, as he had but a short time to stay. I got there in exactly forty minutes. Unfortunately on my way down I broke my model and it would not work. He explained to me, though, that a diagram would do

just as well, as he understood perfectly what I was after.

"Get your diagrams ready and have them here when I return from Boston—in three days," he said; "and be sure you have them accurate."

I spent three days working on those diagrams and they were complete when he arrived. I sat across the desk from the lieutenant as he unrolled my blueprints, and I shall never forget the expression in his eyes when he looked at the first one.

"You've got it!" he declared exultantly. "The cone-shaped tip solves the problem. I congratulate you."

I told him I had applied for a patent.

"That's all right," he said; "that will protect you until a lawyer can put it through for you. We will help you all we can. If you haven't enough money we will defray all expenses; but, you understand," he said, "you will have to make improvements on this idea, and it will take much of your time. How about it?"

I explained to him my financial condition and told him of my literary work which was necessary to keep me going while waiting for the patent to be issued.

The lieutenant suggested to me that if I could live on fifty dollars a week his company would put me on the payroll for that amount indefinitely, so that I might continue my experiments.

The two years that followed were the happiest of my life. The fifty dollars a week enabled us to live in comparative comfort and I could devote my entire

time to the thing I loved—invention. I am naturally of a mechanical turn of mind and am at peace with the world when I can sit down and make things. My friends to-day often come to my room and marvel at a contrivance in the shape of a sliding board on which I can place my typewriting machine and write in bed.

It was in the midst of these happy moments that the blow fell. And this brings me back to the Frenchman and his yarn.

The lawyers notified me that the United States Government had refused to grant me a patent on the periscope because a story had been published, prior to my application, in a French magazine, which had described fantastically the possibilities of an instrument very similar to the one I had invented.

On account of some international law or agreement in regard to patents, which they explained in technical terms I did not understand, my hopes were blasted. Understand you, this Frenchman did not attempt an invention. He merely wrote that such a thing was possible.

My beloved periscope was now public property, and anybody had the right to proceed with its development. Though the submarine-boat people had treated me generously, my devices were no longer needed. I was out of a job!

Really, I believe it was the saddest moment of my life when I went back to the typewriter and began to lay out a story. Ahead of me I saw the old grind, the weary rounds of the magazine offices, the butcher, the grocer, the landlord, and the wolf!

I am not a quitter, though. With as much strength and spirit as I could muster I ground out that story and started downtown with the manuscript in my pocket. Four editors turned it down; and then I had to sell it to a cheap publication that paid me less than one cent a word. My punch was gone!

Though I have written along in a desultory way for several years that punch has never returned. The first-class periodicals turn my stories down and I finally have to sell them to the cheaper—yes, cheapest—ones. Instead of being recognized as a writer of originality I am looked on as a hack.

Less than a month ago I went to the office of a first-class magazine to get an answer on a sea story I had submitted a week before. After waiting nearly an hour in the reception-room the editor sent for me. He was a young man—a stranger to me. Over his desk hung a large portrait of myself, done by a well-known artist, a personal friend of mine.

The young editor did not know me from Adam's house cat; in fact he had never heard of me, though my portrait hung over his desk. I must admit, though, I do not look like that portrait now.

"I'm sorry we can't use that story of yours," he said; and wearily I reached for the manuscript.

"By the way," he went on, "if you intend to continue writing sea stories, why don't you read a book I have here? It will give you an idea of how to write one."

He handed me a beautifully bound volume of sea stories—my own book, a collection of my best stories!

I did not have the heart to tell that young man I was the author of the book, and he was not observant enough to see that the name on my story and that on the book were the same. He would not have believed me if I had told him. I took the manuscript and went to the next editor.

I went away from there thinking of my past triumphs—literary triumphs. I wanted that young editor to keep that book and read it. It might do him some good. Then I thought—Had it done me any good?

My portrait hangs in the office of many editors, it is true. My books are in the libraries. Some relatives of the future generations—I have no children—may be kind enough to point to my works with a slight feeling of pride. That is all I can hope for.

Of this world's goods I have none. I never have had any and I never shall have any. I have led an improvident life. The other night, supperless, I went to my stuffy little hall bedroom, weary of the world. I looked in the mirror and saw I was an old man.

I lighted my pipe and stretched myself on the bed.

"Why is this?" I said to myself. "Why is it that, with all your toil, you have accumulated nothing but passing fame?"

I thought and I thought—and finally an answer came. At first it was jumbled, but gradually it came out in a sentence of four clear-cut words. I guess that is the answer:

I am a sailor!

# SIDELIGHTS ON MORGAN ROBERTSON

By SETH MOYLE

*The author of the following memoir of Morgan Robertson is a prominent literary agent in New York. The anecdotes he relates bring out vividly the personality of Morgan Robertson. Mr. Moyle knew O. Henry and Morgan Robertson in the early, lean years of their literary struggles. The world and time he writes about are gone. Both ended when the brilliant lights that made their Bohemia were extinguished.*

MORGAN ROBERTSON'S personality reflected the vigor and directness of his writings. It was a mighty force. He was a man's man through and through—a power that, once met, never would be forgotten. The artificial, superficial, and hypocritical, all were foreign to his nature. He was too honest in his straight-from-the-shoulder emphasisms for his own good, perhaps. Evasion and even diplomacy were strangers to his makeup. His lack of tact and habit of blurting out his feelings, in stentorian tones, lost him the support of some powers in the magazine world. Accustomed to being catered to, they might have been " jollied " into a more receptive mental perspective. But Morgan Robertson would not indulge this. He never played the game of bluff, and selected the harder road of right rather than the easier line of least resistance.

His was the highest sense of honor, even with the most trivial of things.

"Give me fifty cents," or "Give me fifty dollars," would follow a sudden cyclonic entrance into my offices; and often it would be only a quarter or even a dime asked for.

"I'll have a check from Street & Smith, or from Good-Heart Taylor on Friday. You'll get yours then."

And punctiliously, always, he would present himself with the amount. Many times, I have learned later, in order to keep his word with me and with others, he would leave himself strapped, and, in the absence of carfare, hoof it for several miles from the downtown district to his apartment, far uptown.

Few understood him, but his friends were legion; and beneath his brusque surface there was a heart warmly reciprocating this affection.

So much has been written, since his death, of his career as an able seaman, his spectacular entry, after a very brief apprenticeship, into that most difficult trade, diamond-cutting, and his equally spectacular jump, as an uneducated man, into the fiction-writing world, that I will pass it by.

Like O. Henry and Edwin Bliss (the latter with probably the largest reading public in the United States at the time of his decease, and yet absolutely unknown, personally, because of his choice of fourteen *nom de plumes*), for a great number of years he sold his best work at one cent and one and one-half cents per word. The same material, now, would bring

from $500 to $1,000 per story, which rates ten cents to twenty cents per word; and the books, sold outright for $150 to $250, would bring, under the royalty arrangement, a small fortune, as with the O. Henry collected edition, now selling into the hundreds of thousands.

A volume of anecdotes would not exhaust the stock that could be supplied by the friends of Morgan Robertson. It was his joy to get together with his fellow-craftsmen and "swap" yarns. Morgan's supply in this respect was very limited, and there were a few old war-horses that he always trotted out whenever a newcomer joined the elect, despite the fact that the majority of the boys had heard them again and again for a period of many years. But his method of telling them made them always interesting. Unfortunately, most were of the "stag-story" nature, better presented at "Johnny Baber's" or "Perry's"; but here is his pet, and it stands the light of printed expression. It reflected, incidentally, his hobby, telepathy, mental suggestion, hypnotism, etc.

A day-laborer had suffered much abuse at the hands of a husky foreman who would browbeat this fellow-worker, who was weaker mentally and physically, with strong language, and vary this occasionally with a little muscular exertion. He complained to Morgan Robertson. Morg gave him the "once-over," and inquired, "Have you ever tried mental suggestion? No? Well, do it! Next time that big stiff comes around, just look him straight in the eye—

see. Don't hesitate. Look him straight in the eye and concentrate your mind on the thought. Just say, 'Go to ——, you blinkity-blank!' But don't fail to hold his eye."

A few days later the laborer approached Morgan holding his own eye, which was pretty well bunged up and discolored. His entire anatomy also reflected the result of the foreman's rage. With what little spirit remained he protested. "You're a helluva fine friend, you are!" said he.

With great disgust Morgan surveyed the wreck.

"Did you look him in the eye?" he finally thundered. "And did you concentrate?"

"Yes," whined the other, "and I beat it when I got the chance. I told him to 'Go to ——,' as you told me to do. Now look what he handed to me!"

"Did you let him HEAR you?" shouted Morgan.

"Sure; can't you see for yourself?" forlornly responded the beaten one.

"Well!" deliberated Morgan, "what'd you expect?"

"And to this day," Morgan would conclude, "that same gink hasn't got through his cranium the difference between mental suggestion and the same thought expressed orally in plain English. Solid ivory, I call it."

This is typical of his spun yarns. They were far from the Irvin Cobb, Bob Davis, Roy and Charles Somerville "bell-ringer" type, and the last to be expected from the master narrator of original fiction, as reflected in his "Spun-Yarn" volume. But his

method of telling made them, and they will all live permanently in the minds of his friends.

Because of his initial success with "Sinful Peck" and "Finnegan," there was a constant demand from the editors for this type of humorous material. As his vision broadened and his understanding of things occult and of psychic phenomena became clearer, he evidenced a strong inclination to concentrate on this line of thought. But the majority of editors denied him space. Fred. Duneka, General Manager of Harper & Brothers, and Trumbull White, then editor of *The Red Book*, did most to encourage his inclination in this direction.

Telepathy, hypnotism, mental suggestion, dual personality, extraordinary inventions—this sort of thing he dearly loved to conjure with. And his fiction inventions took practical form, also. One of these, the periscope, was adopted for submarine use and is now in service. In my judgment, only lack of funds and the driving necessity of writing the sort of fiction that would sell, prevented his succeeding in perfecting his invisible searchlight. In the celebrated five-by-twelve bunkroom on West Twenty-fourth Street, he managed, by means of ultraviolet rays, to make remarkable progress with this invention.

One of the most amusing incidents I ever witnessed, where Morgan Robertson was concerned, occurred at my Irving Place apartments. Dan O'Reilly, the celebrated criminal attorney, had been stopping with me for two days in an attempt to get over the effects of

"too much Irish"; *i.e.*, Joseph O'Mara's rendition of Irish songs, a large quantity of Bushmills and Cruiskeen Lawn, and an accommodating fellow-countryman from the Emerald Isle who drove a green taxicab. O'Mara's "Wearin' of the Green" had proved the climax. Dan's nerves, considerably on edge, were again started into the jumping-tooth stage by the repeated whistling of the dumb-waiter tube, the constant ringing of the telephone and hall door-bell, an industrious coal-heaver putting into our cellar a ton of coal, and an over-zealous Italian with a tin-panny hurdy-gurdy grinding out, ironically enough, "The Wearin' of the Green," with "Sweet Marie" as a relief.

Dan had settled himself for relaxation on the dining-room couch. It was a mistake. In rushed Charlie Somerville, the famous journalist, with a bad case of the "jumps," only to be followed by Mrs. G., and her friend, a poetess of passion. They insisted on discussing Christian Science *versus* Mental Science, suffrage, and poetry. It was a world quite foreign to Dan. Then came Morgan Robertson, and he was soon enmeshed in the argument. His best efforts failed to switch it to his own hobbies, and he sought solace from a bottle of Hennessy. The whole proposition was too much for Charlie, and he made for "The Westminster," just around the corner, for a different kind of refreshment. Roy Norton, one of Morgan's best friends, presented himself with a "Blue-Monday" grouch. A story had failed to sell. Morgan read him a lecture, intended

indirectly for Dan, on the evils of alcohol, every now and then falling back on "Hennessy" for support. He, too, had occasion for resentment, it seemed. His pet story, "The Grain Ship," later featured in *Harper's Monthly*, had gone a-begging and he was broke.

Dan brightened. Here were waters more familiar to him. He ventured a dip. "And what might the story be about, Morgan?" he inquired with that broad smile and geniality that endeared him to all who knew him.

Cutting the words into sharp syllables, the author ejaculated viciously, "Hy-dro-pho-bic rats!" And with a growl for purposes of emphasis he repeated, "Hy-dro-pho-bic rats!! Mad dog inoculates rats! Mad rats run wild! Merry hell to pay! Great excitement on ship! Sensational story! Best I've ever done!"

This was too much for Dan, who beat a hasty retreat, to be followed by Roy, who saw no hope for Hennessy relief, the ammunition having been exhausted. Shortly Morgan, too, departed, and "The Westminster" then found the entire party of male celebrities reunited.

# MY SKIRMISH WITH MADNESS

## By MORGAN ROBERTSON

*Bozeman Bulger in his sketch relates the circumstances that led up to Morgan Robertson's voluntarily placing himself as a patient in the psychopathic ward in Bellevue Hospital. Serious as was his predicament he did not fail to appreciate the humor of some of the situations in which he found himself. As a result of the baseless premonitions that he was losing his reason Morgan Robertson showed a boyish eagerness to have everyone with whom he desired to leave an impression read this article, which was originally published in the "National Sunday Magazine." He felt that it explained many things about him that others did not understand.*

FOR twelve years I had thought that in me was latent insanity that only needed extra mental strain to make active. The usual mental strain incident to short-story writing was always with me, and I had eased it by moderate drinking. In this I had a better excuse than had Jack London, who drank because of suggestion and availability, but I do not offer it as an excuse—only as an explanation. Alcohol, by the way, never was a mental stimulant to me, only an inhibition of troubling thought, mainly of my coming madness, enabling me to concentrate

my mind on my work. Until my physical health gave out it worked well, as I never got drunk and could always turn down an invitation if I felt that I had enough. But some three years prior to this writing I met with an accident, and, being poor, sought no medical attention. So, imbued with an early code of conduct—which decrees that a man must not quit work until he drops in his tracks—I limped around until rheumatism set in. For years I could not sleep at night without an opiate. And then one day, with fifteen cents in my pocket, and not knowing where the next money was to come from, I told my trouble to a friend who listened sympathetically.

"The hospital for you," he said at length; and, for half an hour he kept the telephone busy, calling up the powers that be in New York, then said to me: "Go down to Bellevue in the morning and see the Medical Superintendent. I've had him on the wire, and he'll take care of you."

And now, having thrown up my hands, a strange tranquillity came to me, utterly at variance with my habit of mind, which had never known tranquillity or peace except after some temporary victory in the battle of life. I slept well that night, and with the nerve of a gambler signed a check for a good breakfast in a chop house where I had spent much money and owed none, then with my fifteen cents in my pocket, started for Bellevue Hospital, a mile distant. I remember that a policeman

stopped me close to the hospital, and allowed me to proceed on my staggering way when I stammered: "Bellevue." I staggered from weakness, for I had drunk nothing that day. The next I remember was talking to the Medical Superintendent, a man who listened to me kindly, but whose face I would not recognize now.

About all I can recall of the interview is that I said I needed help from the outside—that, while I had been able to advise and assist others in trouble I could not care for myself. I cannot recall what he said to me, or whether or not he said anything; but I know that he led me out of his office, across the grounds, and into a two-story brick building standing alone. Here, I somewhat came to myself and began to take notice. I was left in the presence of a doctor and a white-clad nurse.

My tranquillity of mind—or was it apathy—was still with me, though I was now shaking convulsively and my thick tongue could hardly articulate an answer to the questions of the doctor. And as the nurse led me through a door into a ward—a long, wide hall bordered by sleeping-rooms—this mind state was in nowise disturbed by the sight of a man on his knees before an armchair, praying fervently. "Some poor devil whose time has come," I thought, as I followed the nurse, wondering, too, when I might be on my knees.

The nurse was a plump, pretty young woman, with smiling eyes, and as she led me into a room turned

to me with those eyes slightly moist and her face saddened by sympathy—genuine sympathy, as I learned later.

"Now, you poor fellow," she said, "take off your clothes and get into bed for a good rest. I'll help you undress."

"Can I have a drink?" I answered, selfishly, not appreciating the sympathy to which I was not accustomed.

"No; but I'll bring you something just as good. Let me help you with that necktie."

I had thrown off my outer clothing, and she removed my collar and tie. Then she pulled down my suspenders and began unbuttoning my shirt; but here I balked. I was ever a modest man, even when dying.

"You must be undressed," she said, kindly, yet firmly, "and get into pajamas."

I sat down on the bed and looked her squarely in the face.

"Now, you're not going to stay here while I undress, are you?" I asked, as kindly and firmly as I could in my agitation.

"Would you rather I'd go? Can you undress alone?"

"I can," I replied promptly.

"I'll send in a man," she said, and departed.

A white-clad male nurse—a pleasant-faced young giant—came in with a book, and stripped me down. Then he entered my various measurements in the book, and stowed my limp limbs into a suit of pajamas.

"Going to take my finger-tips?" I asked, as I looked at the book.

"Going to kill anybody?" he asked in answer.

"I may," I said, thinking of some editors I knew. "That is, if I get well."

"Forget it. You'll never kill anything." I wondered what he meant, as I turned in.

My friendly nurse returned and gave me a dose of aromatic ammonia. Then, when the nerves within me had straightened out a little, another nurse arrived. She was a slim girl, with a sweet face and pleasant voice, and she gave me a tablet and a swallow of water. "You're to take one every half hour until you've had six," she said.

"Do I get anything to eat?" I asked, as the rattle of dishes came to my ears.

"Not until supper time. You're dieting to-day."

"Well, can I have a smoke? I brought my pipe and tobacco."

"You must ask the doctor," she said evasively.

No doctor appeared, and I made the best of it until, when she brought the third tablet, she also brought a piece of plug chewing tobacco and a cuspidor.

"Don't overdo it," she said, "but I know you are suffering for a smoke, and this will take away the craving."

She was right. I had not chewed tobacco for a great many years, and a small morsel of that plug went a long way. I talked with this girl until her duties called her, and felt that we were getting ac-

quainted; but when my fourth tablet was given me and I resumed the conversation I was surprised at the nurse's lack of response.

"Do you chew tobacco?" she said, as she noticed the plug on the window-sill.

"Why, you gave it to me," I answered, "to stop the craving for a smoke."

"I?" she laughed. "Why, I'm just back from lunch. I was going out when you were admitted, but I'm taking care of you now. You must take me for Miss ——"

She pronounced a Russian or Polish name which I cannot yet pronounce, nor spell.

I looked at her, but could not believe her. My defective mental vision would not separate the two girls, yet in physique, voice, and temperament, they were opposites. Not until the next day could I tell which was which, though that afternoon they often visited my room together. I have gone into this detail to show that I was pretty far gone.

This third nurse deserves a better description than I can give her, not because of her beauty, though it was of an order to first impress a normal observer. It did not impress me at all, and now, as I write, I cannot visualize her face, and perhaps would not know her in the street without her white uniform and cap. It was her wonderful personality that sank into my soul and made me respect her, admire her, and at last fear her. She had a rich, strong, musical voice that encompassed at least two octaves in ordinary conversation, and when used in accents of

command—for she was head nurse, though the youngest of all—held a carrying power that sent it to every corner of the ward and adjoining rooms. When able to get up and watch her at her duties I called her the Chief Mate—mentally.

When she had given me my sixth and last tablet on that first day she took me by the hand. It was always pleasant to hold a girl's hand, but this experience was especially so. A delicious, tingling thrill went up my arm, and I reached for her other hand, to hold that, too; but she forestalled me by clasping me gently by the wrist, while she smiled at me. I did not know then that this gentle hand-clasp was a jiu jitsu grip that would have dislocated my shoulder had I deserved it; but I did not deserve it. Some inner consciousness had always protected me in such emergencies, and I remained quiescent with one small hand in my loosening fingers and the other around my wrist. Then I seemed floating away in the air, and when I wakened the supper dishes were rattling, and I was steady of nerve, rested, and ravenous. With a smile and a hand-clasp she had given me nearly three hours of blessed sleep.

What is this marvelous power or emanation from one human being to another which has been called mesmerism, animal magnetism, odic force, and seems to be the basic law of all the New Thought cults? It is stronger than hypnotism, for it does not demand the consent of the subject. Once, in a Turkish bath, a big, red-headed Irishman laid me out to rub me down. He had a low, retreating

forehead, a brutal face, and apparently just enough of intelligence to hold his job. He rubbed, kneaded, punched, and thumped me. He hurt me; I thought I could feel my ribs cracking and my joints uncoupling, yet I could not utter a word in protest, and finally under his painful manipulations sank into unconsciousness and was aroused by the cold shower when he had finished. Whatever this mysterious force is, that big brute possessed it in common with this gentle, delicate girl.

But she did not use it on me again. That evening the doctors went the rounds and I was put under regular treatment, which included sedatives. I asked for a smoke, and was told that, when able to get up I could go outdoors and smoke, but not in the ward. As for thirty-five years my pipe, practically, had never grown cold, my craving for a smoke may be imagined, especially as, when the ward had quieted down at about nine, and lights were turned off, distant shouts, whoops, and screams kept me awake. It required a second sedative to put me to sleep.

All that day, as I lay in bed, satisfied that I was being cared for, I had been annoyed by a man clad in a red and white striped bath-robe who would stop in front of my door and peer in at me, sometimes glaring wildly, again grimacing. As a matter of fact there were several such men—patients able to be up—but to me, as in the case of the two nurses, there was but one. In the morning, however, while waiting for my breakfast, I was able to differentiate; I at least knew a black man from a white,

and when a sad-faced man-and-brother looked in at me I knew it was not the ill-bred person of the day before, even though he wore a striped bath-robe.

But my new visitor went him one better. As he stared at my recumbent figure the sadness left his face; it took on a wide, delighted smile; then he began to laugh, softly at first, then unrestrainedly. Nodding and wagging his head, his eyes half closed and his mouth wide open, he backed away from my door, and his laughter died away as he went down the ward. No doubt he was happy—and I like to make people happy; but I do not like to be laughed at. Sensitiveness to ridicule has always been my pet weakness, and I felt humiliated and hurt.

Again that sad, somber countenance appeared at my door; again it expanded to a huge smile, and broke into fragments as his joyous laughter rang out. He backed away again, apparently unable to stand the sight of me, and I began to be annoyed. I had no mirror at hand, but I looked at my shoulders, arms, and hands—all that I could see of myself. There was nothing to laugh at, I thought. But he came again, looked me over, and as he began to chuckle I felt my hair tingle down to the back of my neck.

"What are you laughing at?" I demanded.

"I'se laughin' at you, boss," he answered, his smile still with him, but in a state of arrested development.

"What's wrong with me?"

"I dunno, boss, but I jess got to laugh at you, suh. You look so funny."

"Get to h—l away out of this," I yelled, "or I'll beat your brains out with this pillow." I sat up and grabbed the pillow, the only missile at hand—not a very hard pillow, but not so soft, I felt, as his brain. He backed away with a frightened look in his face, and I never saw him again. But he had given me something to think about.

"Softening of the brain," I said to myself, as I sank back, shaking in every limb from excitement. Then I remembered the shrieks and screams of the day before, and when one of the night nurses appeared with my breakfast I asked her where I was.

"The psychopathic ward," she answered. "Didn't you know?"

So, I had come to my Kingdom at last. I was in the famous, or—as I had always thought—the infamous psychopathic ward of Bellevue Hospital, the place where sane men were incarcerated for trivial reasons and driven insane by the environment and treatment. Did the darkness of desolation and despair close down on my soul? Not a bit. I was used to the thought, and had merely forgotten it recently in view of my physical condition. I felt that my life's work was done, and that while I had not rounded out my life by forgiving all my enemies and paying all my debts, this might be condoned in consideration of the energy I had expended and the penalty I had paid. The Medical Superintendent had diagnosed my case correctly, and placed me where I belonged—in a madhouse, to die. And they

were all good to me because I was doomed. So, I was content; but I *did* want a smoke.

After breakfast the day watch came on; and the nurse appeared with her arms full of sheets and pillow slips, and turned me out of bed. "Go out in the ward," she said, "and walk up and down a little, while I change the sheets. Clean sheets every morning, here." I obeyed her, and had the first good look at the place where I expected to end my days. It was about a hundred feet long and sixteen wide, bordered, as I have said, by rooms, five of which were reading-room, linen-room, lavatory, kitchen and bathroom, the rest sleeping rooms, each containing two beds. Running down the center of the ward was an eight foot wide length of fiber which, like the hardwood borders, was given a dancing floor polish with floor wax. About twenty patients, all clad in striped bath-robes, pajamas, and slippers, were cleaning up, sweeping and dusting, under the direction of the male nurses, or orderlies. A few were pushing square castings padded on the under side back and forth from end to end of the ward, polishing that more than slippery fiber mat. I thought this was merely to exercise the patients, as nothing, it seemed, could improve the polish. A few eyes were staring or glaring, a few faces were twitching, and some of the workers muttered unintelligibly; but there was no conversation. It was a depressing spectacle, and I returned to my room, where I found that my nurse now had an assistant,

a middle-aged, very effeminate person, who chattered volubly and seemed to hamper her more than help her.

"Anything I can do?" I asked, weakly, yet willing to be of use.

"Yes," she answered, with a smile. "You can lie right down on this bed and stay there. I'll cover you up."

She chased the sissy out, and I stretched myself on the bed. She spread the bed clothing over me, arranged the pillows carefully, and tucked me in. The situation brought back memories of my childhood, and as I looked up at her pleasant, sunny face I almost involuntarily uttered the word "mother." She smiled down on me, patted my cheek, and left me. "Mother" was my name for her after that. I could not pronounce her real name, and had to call her something. She deserves to be a mother —a happy mother, too.

But the utterance of the word "mother" threw me into a mood unknown for years, and soon the tears came, hot, copious and scalding, streaming down my cheeks in two steady currents and wetting the pillow. I shifted my head, and then turned the pillow, but not until the slip was soaked did the flood cease. Then, ashamed of the weakness, I traded pillows with the other bed, and when "mother" came back with medicine she did not notice. But the tears did me good. I know several other roughnecks who would benefit by a few tears, brought on, preferably, by physical distress.

I slept most of that day, and was wakened by the little Chief Mate, who brought me my supper and gave *me* a name—one that I liked. I have been called several different kinds of names in my journey through this life, but I never liked them and never accepted them. Now I received one that sounded good.

"Here, OLD SOUL," she said, in her rich, musical voice, "is something to eat. Will it be enough?"

It was a good *invalid's* supper, but I've been a lifelong meat eater, and I asked for meat. She brought it. Then I wanted to hold hands again, but all I got was that gentle jiu jitsu grip. However, I was given a smoke next day, which, as I had been forty-eight hours without one, did me nearly as much good. The house doctor took me into the office, and noticing my impatience while waiting for my pipe and tobacco, gave me a cigar. "Kindness to the damned," I mused, gloomily, as I puffed.

But I was mistaken. And I want to say before going further, that while in that place I received nothing but genuine sympathy and genuine kindness from every member of the staff, from the head doctor down to the cook, and *not one word of criticism or admonition.* Meanwhile, my health was improving, so much so that I began to take an impersonal interest in the Annex.

The Annex is a small ward in the rear of the large one, separated from it by a locked door at the end of that long fiber mat. It is where the violent cases are placed as soon as admitted, and is a place

of punishment for those who break out occasionally. From it emanated the whoops, yelps, shrieks, and screams I had heard the first day and night, which sounded like the barkings of a kennel full of collie dogs, and which I had now grown used to. It was given me to watch, on my first day out of bed, the skill and celerity with which those trained orderlies could shoot a "nut" into the Annex, or, as I called it, the Booby Hatch. A tall, serious, intellectual looking patient left his bed clad only in pajamas; then seeking the middle of the ward, lifted his right hand high above his head and began the Lord's Prayer in a loud, sonorous voice. He had got as far as "Thy Kingdom come!" when at a signal from the Chief Mate, two orderlies seized him by the collar and arms, one each side. They pushed him ahead, and naturally his knees stiffened; then they tilted him back until he raked like the mainmast of an old-fashioned schooner-of-war, and they slid him, feet first, the prayer still going, and the little Chief Mate running ahead with her keys, until, with a final roaring "AMEN," he shot into the Annex and the door closed on him. I never saw *him* again. It would have been ludicrous had it not been so pathetic, and no one seemed amused but a defective boy beside me on a settee. He snickered, and I looked reprovingly at him.

On the next day I was allowed liberty to go out in the grounds and smoke all I wanted to and as often. I'm afraid I was somewhat of a trial to the nurses, who alone had keys to the locked doors, for,

clad only in pajamas and slippers, with the uniform bath-robe, I could not stay out long on account of the cold, nor indoors long on account of my craving for a smoke. I would stand near the rear side door of the ward, waiting for a nurse to come near and see me. Once, a nurse spied me from far up the ward and called out to another, nearer to me: "Miss ——, let the dog out," and the door was opened for me with injunctions not to bark loud or chase cats. Again, one of them passed close while I patiently waited, and eyeing me with mock sternness, opened the door, and as I slipped out remarked, "S-h-s-s-s-scat!"

Outside, running along the full length of the two wards, was a covered runway, floored with smooth planking and lighted by windows. Though cold as outdoors, it was sheltered from the wind, and made a famous place for exercise. Still, in my slippered feet and scant apparel I needed to walk fast and far to keep my blood circulating. However, I got partial relief one day. I stood for a moment at the entrance to this runway, and saw coming toward me from the main building a patient whom I had noticed a few days back walking up and down the ward, wild of eye and holding conversation with himself. Then I had seen him led to the Annex, and I suppose that from there he had gone to a ward in the main building for special treatment of some organic trouble. With an orderly at each side of him he came along quietly enough until they led him into the runway; then he broke loose with a torrent of profanity, and struggled

furiously. Sane or insane, he knew he was being taken to the Booby Hatch, and resented it. But it did him no good—harm, rather, for he lost one slipper. They had given him the preliminary push ahead to make him stiffen his knees, then canted him back for a long slide; but the floor was rough, and he would not slide; so, his progress down the runway was a succession of jumps, in one of which he lost the slipper. I secured it and finding it new, thick-soled and warm, donned it, leaving my own in its place. From that time on one foot was warm, the other cold; but I was impartial, and changed slippers occasionally. And, as I walked and pondered on the incident there came to my mind the swift transit of the prayerful man into the Annex, and I knew now why they kept that fiber mat so shiny and smooth. It was not only to give exercise to the "nuts" but to make it easy to slide them along.

The psychopathic ward is a clearing house between the various police courts and the asylums. Patients came in singly at all hours of the day and night, and went out in bunches, to Central Islip, Ward's Island, or elsewhere. In less than a week I was the patriarch of the ward; all who had entered before me had gone to some asylum except one, a quiet, elderly man who went home in the care of his wife. I do not know what trouble of mind brought him there; perhaps it was like my own, for during my stay he and I were the only ones to be released. I will say in passing that I had not yet discovered what

my mental trouble really was, even though I had studied up the various 'phobias and manias, and tested myself for the symptoms: I had them all.

No man is a judge of his own mental condition, though he may judge the mental condition of others. On the day when the very effeminate person was scolding " mother," a heavy-set, middle-aged German, with a serious, intelligent face, watched him awhile, then, catching my eye, smiled and tapped his forehead. He could not speak English, but the world-known gesture indicated his belief that the effeminate person was insane. Yet, this man, after sitting around in the chairs that day and part of the next, apparently much interested in his surroundings, suddenly sprang to his feet and went berserk, roaring out inarticulate words in German. The Chief Mate was at lunch, but as it was a clear case for the Booby Hatch, the nurse in charge signaled to the only orderly on duty at the time, a powerfully built young fellow named Sullivan. I give his real name, for I like to give such a man credit and publicity. It was he who had taken my dimensions when going to bed on the first day. He was of Danish blood, I was told, in spite of his name, and he had the smooth, pink face and clear, steady gray eyes of an intelligent boy. He took the lunatic by the arm, and met resistance; then, so quickly that I could not follow the maneuver, Sullivan was behind him, with his right arm pinioning the two arms of the other. The man was helpless; he could not wrench his elbows, drawn near together at his back, free from Sullivan's

grip. He bellowed like an angry bull, and swayed back and forth, dragging Sullivan around the floor. I have read that the formula of a maniac's strength is seven times the normal. If so, Sullivan exerted seven times his normal strength, for he mastered him. Not a word did he say, nor did he use his left arm, hanging limply at his side; but his face showed the strain he was under. The corners of his mouth drooped, and his smooth brow corrugated to tense, deep wrinkles. Back and forth they swung, the madman roaring at every breath; then he suddenly sank to the floor. Sullivan sank with him, rested a moment, and with hardly an apparent effort, stood erect, bringing that hundred and eighty pounds of German lunacy with him. Then the incoherent roaring was resumed, and it continued until the little Chief Mate arrived. She laid her hand on his shoulder, he quieted down, and Sullivan, bleeding from four fingernail gashes on the back of his left hand, that looked as though made by a Bengal tiger's claws, released him, and the Chief Mate led him to the Annex.

Hats off to Sullivan, with the physical strength of a maniac and the self-control and forbearance of a gentleman. He painted his wounds with iodine and resumed duty with nothing to say.

By this time I was thoroughly afraid of that Chief Mate. She faced me in the middle of the ward that day, smiled in my face, patted me on the chest, poked me in the ribs, and for a moment fooled me into the thought that she was affectionately caressing

me. But she was not, she was going through my pockets, looking for matches, knives, toothpicks, or other implements by which I might do harm to myself or other "nuts."

Like the girls, men nurses, or orderlies, seemed to have been selected for temperamental qualities, plus physical strength. Each one was intelligent, good natured, and gentlemanly. One, a night man in the Annex, was the largest human being I have ever seen outside of a circus or a museum. He must have been six inches over six feet in height and about thirty inches across the shoulders; but he was so correctly proportioned that at a distance, standing alone, he seemed of ordinary size. It was only when close to him that one could realize his enormous displacement. In his white uniform he suggested a battleship; he moved slowly, but covered ground. And a few nights after Sullivan's battle there came a time when his strength was needed.

The defective boy I have spoken of had become a nuisance. He was about eighteen, and full grown, but had the innocent face of a nine-year-old child, and the warm-hearted girl nurses made much of him. I often thought that what he really needed was, not the attention of alienists, but a rope's-end four times a day, after meals and at bedtime. I may have been prejudiced, but boys, especially noisy, singing, whistling boys like him, were always my dearest antipathy. This boy suffered from exaggerated Ego. He was the center of the universe, and the ward, the whole staff, and the patients were made for his amuse-

ment. He was never still a minute except when asleep; he shouted between mouthfuls at his meals; his special delight was in tormenting the weak, helpless, and nervous old men who daily drifted in. He would enter the reading-room and scatter the inmates to the outer ward. He would follow and drive them back. He would not listen to admonition, or requests that he be silent. He got so on my frazzled nerves that when I learned that he was going to Ward's Island I was nearly as pleased as I was at my own release when it came. He was strong as a bull, had been arrested on the street and had taken the policeman's club away from him before being conquered. This had induced the magistrate to send him to the psychopathic ward for examination.

On the day he learned that he was listed for Ward's Island he grew worse, shouting, singing, and whistling, entering the rooms and teasing the mental wrecks in bed, and becoming so offensive that he was several times led to the Booby Hatch for punishment, always, however, to be taken back when he had aroused the more violent inmates there to an uproar. Only the little Chief Mate could quiet him; but at seven in the evening she went off duty and the head night nurse had charge. We had all turned in, waiting for him to subside so that we could go to sleep; but he grew noisier as the evening progressed. Then I heard, between his shouts and whoops, the voice of the night nurse saying to an orderly: "Put him in the Annex for the night."

"I can't do it alone," came the answer.

"Get help, and when he quiets down give him a cold shower."

A cold shower, be it known to those who have not tried it, is the much misunderstood "water cure" of the Philippines, and is an excellent sedative for nerves, but something of a punishment to anyone not accustomed to it. I now was interested, but not in his nerves. I heard footsteps from the Annex, and a terse command to the boy to "get up," followed by his loud protest. Then there were the sounds of a struggle, followed by a derisive whoop of victory from the boy. Then more footsteps, then more shouts, screams, and oaths from the boy. He was now thoroughly insane; and it was not until a third reinforcement arrived from the Annex that I could tell by the sounds that he was being dragged—not slid—back to the Booby Hatch. Hospital etiquette forbade my getting up to witness his Waterloo, but the uproar of sounds from beyond the door told me that the lunatics in the Annex had joined him in his mood. In half an hour the barkings ceased, and I heard the splash of the shower bath, and the grievous screams of the boy; then came his whimpering plaint as he was led back to bed, then silence, and I rolled over to sleep, happier than I had been since I had held hands with the Chief Mate. To such depths of hateful malevolence can a spoiled child bring a sick man. In the morning a patient who roomed near the Annex told me that it had taken five orderlies, including the giant, to drag that

animated pork past his door. He was a good boy all next day; he was asleep, on the reading-room floor.

Meanwhile I gained strength daily, taking longer walks in the runway and cold showers every morning. This brought a curious comment from a kind old fellow-patient who noticed it.

"You know," he said, "that this is the observation room of the psychopathic ward, don't you? Well, everything we do is observed by the nurses, and an entry made in the books. If we argue, quarrel, or do anything unusual, it counts against us, and if they think we are in any way crazy they'll ship us off to some place where we'll never get out. Don't take any more cold baths."

I was half inclined to follow his advice; for the psychopathic ward, compared to what I had heard about asylums, was a very pleasant place. It had been a haven of refuge to me, a place to come to and die in, surrounded by sympathetic girls and men, who had shown me more kindness than I had ever received from strangers. But I had graduated physically beyond the need and appreciation of this kindness; the sight and sounds of my fellow-patients now irritated me. The chief annoyances of my life since I began writing have been noisy boys, barking dogs, practicing musicians and soloists, and effeminate men. Excepting the dogs, whose place was filled by the lunatics in the Annex, I had all these annoyances around me—close to me, and I could not escape them. The ward became crowded about this time and I now had a room-mate, a talkative young man whose

vocabulary was large. There was much conversation in the evening before "lights out," but my share was included in the two words: "Shut up." Yet in spite of this mental friction my health and my nerves steadily improved. But I still thought I was insane, and was nearly floored one day when one of the doctors told me I was to be discharged.

"Why," I gasped, "am I all right—all right in my head?"

"Nothing wrong with you, but nerves," he said. "You're the sanest man we ever had here."

"But what ailed me?" I asked, remembering the conviction of the years.

"The letter W, and what follows it."

"Women?"

"Women never bother you. You're too ugly."

"Work?"

"Work never hurt anyone. Whiskey and worry are your trouble. Cut them both out, for one will produce the other."

And so I was sane, and the haunting horror of the long years was gone from me. I needed the rest of the day and a night of sleep to assimilate the gladness of it. My burden was lifted and the whole world was changed. I had never been insane, and never would be; for I had passed the acid test of sanity; I had endured for two weeks the society of madmen, had suffered in concentrated form every nuisance and annoyance that had broken me down, and had steadily recovered my health and steadied my nerves against the down pull! Why? Because

I had received bodily care and sympathy—almost unknown to me in the outer world—and nothing to drink. I resolved to continue the treatment.

But my next experience in the outer world told me that sympathy could not be had for the mere need of it. My first act on leaving the hospital gate was to enter the nearest saloon and buy a drink of good whiskey, which to the pained amazement of the bartender I poured into the cuspidor.

"Where'd you come from?" he asked.

"The psychopathic ward," I answered.

"How'd you get out?"

"The gate."

"Well," he said, as he took the bottle out of my reach and wiped the bar, "you can always go back."

The drink habit has had several explanations. Jack London lays it to availability and suggestion. He is but partly right. It has been called a strong man's weakness and a weak man's vice. This is a contradiction in terms, for a strong man cannot be weak, and a weak man cannot be vicious. It needs weakness to be weak, and strength to be vicious. In my judgment it is a sickness, or the symptom of a sickness—in my own case, the latter. It is a sickness as contagious to temperamental people as any germ disease, and is curable by the same general treatment—medicine and hygiene.

# MORGAN ROBERTSON, HERO

By J. O'NEILL

*This appreciation of Morgan Robertson was written by an artist friend. As may be gained by reading between the lines of this contribution, Morgan Robertson found the author a ready sympathizer with the psychic beliefs that became so dominant in his later years.*

"HE died standing up."

Those words formed part of the message flashed across the country from Atlantic City on March 24, 1915, telling of the death of one of America's heroes—Morgan Robertson, sailor, clock-repairer, diamond-setter, sea-tale writer, and—hero.

My acquaintance with "Morg," as he was affectionately called by his intimates, dates from a muggy afternoon when I was introduced to him and his eight-by-twelve room in a Twenty-fourth Street studio building, New York City. I was walking up the avenue when I met a model of mine, who told me she was on her way to his studio, and, hearing that I had never met him, invited me to accompany her; I assented, for, having read some of his sea-tales with great enjoyment, I was glad to have the opportunity of meeting the author.

His room contained a bathtub which he had had raised from the floor high enough to serve the purpose

of a table, into which it was converted by the addition of a thick drawing board. Hanging from the edges of this board was drapery of some kind—denim, I think—which hid the ugly bathtub from the gaze of the profane. A lounge-bed, sadly dented in the middle where the springs had given way under the frequent impact of his friends who used it to sit on, a small table on which was a typewriter, a gas range, and two chairs occupied the remainder of the floor space, with the exception of a strip of floor about two feet wide, forming a sort of runway for Morg to walk on while doing his thinking. On the walls were a United States weather chart, showing the tides and winds, a couple of drawings made to illustrate one of his sea-tales, a hanging cupboard, and a shocking caricature of Morg himself dashed off in a spirit of fun by one of his newspaper friends, and labeled (libeled is the correct term) "Reversion to Type." Morg, who fortunately had a keen sense of the ludicrous, took special pride in drawing his visitors' attention—and admiration—to this caricature.

After the usual introductions were over, the visitor was put completely at his ease, for Robertson had the traditional hospitality of the sailor, a hospitality that was his own undoing, for he was taken advantage of at every opportunity.

On the occasion of my first visit I noticed a savory smell coming from the direction of the gas range. Morg, following my look of inquiry, informed me his supper was being cooked, and invited me to stay and take "pot luck" with him, remarking that

my friend, the model, did not need an invitation, for if his guess was correct, she had come with the intention of sharing his supper, an accusation she cheerfully and laughingly admitted. Being a Bohemian, and also curious to know what kind of supper cooked by a mere man attracted our friend the model, I accepted, and inquired what it consisted of. Morg said he had about ten pounds of white beans (haricot blanc), boiling merrily in the big pot on the range, on the top of them being a chunk of fat pork to give the necessary flavor, while in the oven were some "Murphies" baking. Looking at his watch, he said it was almost supper time, and commenced to brew a big pot of black coffee, quantities of which, so I discovered later, formed the basis of the inspiration of his sea stories, and which was to lay the foundation of stomach and nervous troubles from which he suffered in his later years. While the coffee was cooking, he "laid the table" (which was a small table used by dressmakers) with cups and saucers, etc., which he fished out of the recesses of the cupboard hanging above his bathtub table, and then he helped us to as savory and appetizing a meal as ever Bohemian ate.

Morgan Robertson not only could cook up yarns, he could also cook beans—believe me. I found out later that Morg's beans were known from one end of New York's Bohemia to the other.

While we were doing justice to his supper, Morg told me that when my model friend needed a real meal, she always dropped in to see him about

supper time so as to get some of his celebrated beans "under her belt," and in consequence he had given her a nickname, "Beans," a name she was always known to us ever after. I did not know until a couple of days later that poor old Morg was going through one of his periods of "hard times." I certainly would not have guessed it from his lavish generosity of the little he had—but that was Morgan Robertson.

As I passed near his place every morning on my way to my studio, which was but a few blocks away, I was a frequent caller. Having studied and worked along lines that Morg had perhaps touched but lightly—if at all—we were strongly attracted to each other; also, I had tasted of the bitterness of existence with the same disappointments due to the shortcomings of myself and our friends the magazine editors; I knew what it was to seek in my pocket for the non-existent nickel, and to wonder where the next meal was coming from, when a dollar bill looked as big as the map of Europe, and "ten dollars" sounded like a fairy tale; I knew what it meant to pull my belt in another notch so that the muscles surrounding the hiatus in the region of my solar plexus could have something on which to get a purchase—hence, I belonged! Morg and I had little need of an introduction.

At the time I speak of he was harassed by the want of money, also by the fact that his brain was fagged and weary from the continued strain of creative work.

His method of work led to curious results. He would lie on his lounge-bed, sometimes for hours at a time, in a semi-sleeping state. His ideas would gradually marshal themselves into a coherent, consecutive narrative up to a certain point, and then—they would stop—whether he liked or not, and that stopping, sometimes in the middle of an exciting situation, was the plague of his literary existence. He would then sit at his typewriter and pound out his story in a steady stream of words until he had finished what he had gotten in his somnolent state. Then he would be obliged to wait for the rest of the narrative, which sometimes would not come for days, sometimes not for weeks! In the meantime Morg would be worried sick thinking of his debts, a frame of mind hardly conducive to turning out good creative work, but which was, unfortunately, the condition he usually had to work under. We little realize what the work of a creative artist costs its author.

This problem of the stopping short of his inspiration was the source of many arguments between us. He had read extensively on psychology, and had worked out a solution of the matter for himself which seemed to him to be the true solution. It was this:

Years ago, when he first took up literary work, he had come in touch with a young lady who had the ambition—but not the "stickativeness"—to be a great writer, and having a great admiration for her proficiency in the use of flowing language, got (to use his own words) *en rapport* with her "mind-state"

and thought waves, and, himself supplying the doggedness and stickativeness which she lacked, the combination made Morgan Robertson the writer. While my opinion may not be of great value, I am convinced that he was a very sensitive psychic, and the semi-comatose condition of his strong physical body was necessary for the psychic part of him to manifest; the alternative being, that he was used (as a medium) by a discarnate man functioning on what the mystics of the Middle Ages and also the modern Theosophists call the "Astral Plane"—the next world above us, or the "spirit summer-land" of the spiritualists; that this discarnate man was—or is—a writer, and used Robertson as a channel for his literary talents and output on the physical plane.

This latter solution is not so far-fetched or improbable as the man in the street may imagine, for many writers of note more than hint at the probability of that same method being used in their own cases. When we are thinking along a definite line of thought, a totally foreign thought will insert itself into our consciousness, a thought that has absolutely nothing in common with our previous chain of thinking, and which, so far as we can see, has not been the result of or stimulated by that previous thinking. Where has that new thought come from? Psychologists affirm it has seeped up from our sub-consciousness, which is a possibility, but the question still remains, why should that particular thought come at that particular time, unasked, and when the waking consciousness was busily engaged along a totally dif-

ferent line of thought? We say, "a thought came to us," and, in saying it, we are unaware that unconsciously we have uttered a truth, for we are constantly affected and influenced by the thoughts of *all* our fellow-humans, whether they be on this plane or other planes of life. And it is not an unreasonable idea to suppose that a young man, full of ambition, cut off in the middle of his career (by what we call "death"), carries with him into the next plane of existence the same ambition, the same longing to give forth his message, but which he now is unable to give on the physical plane because he has been divested of his physical body. What is more likely than that such a one would use a physical man of sensitive psychic makeup as a channel to give that message to physical plane inhabitants? Mystics of all ages have asserted that not only is it possible, but that it is of more frequent occurrence than the average man wots of.

The writing of one of his stories is a case in point. About ten or eleven years ago, he wrote the tale called "Fifty Fathoms Down," which told of a United States submarine torpedo-boat being run down at night, shipping a lot of water which put the machinery out of business, with the result that the boat sinks to the depth indicated by the title. The lieutenant in command clearly sees that it is a matter of but a short time before suffocation will put an end to their activities, and finally to their lives, and decides to eject the crew one after another through the torpedo tubes, he himself, after ejecting the last

man, remaining to wrestle with the problem of remembering the chemical formula of a drying agent for gases—" something he had studied years ago at school "—and also other chemical combinations which would enable him to dry out his motors and so raise the boat to the surface.

He [Robertson] had gotten this tale (along with the chemical formulæ) *en bloc* during one of his semi-sleeping states, and as he knew as much about chemistry as he did of the man in the moon (according to his own statement), he took his manuscript to a professor of chemistry at Columbia College for verification. Although he had never seen it worked out just that way, the professor opined the formulæ were O. K., which vastly amused Morg, who was tickled at the idea of him, a sailor, presenting new chemical formulæ to a professor of chemistry.

Whatever the solution—Robertson at this particular time was in a ferment of distress. He had a couple of tales started but which would not continue; he needed the money badly which those tales, when completed, would bring; add to his troubles a gay young spark who occupied the next room and who persisted in coming home all " lit up "—generally accompanied by a boisterous companion who helped to make things lively—just at the time when poor old Morg was trying to connect the scattered threads of his tales, and one has a faint picture of what he went through for about six weeks of nerve-racking torment.

Desperate and not knowing which way to turn,

he came to the conclusion that hypnotism would perhaps help him. Full of this notion he interviewed a prominent and well-known physician who used hypnotism in his practice. He frankly told the M. D. of his lack of funds and also of his other troubles, saying that he thought if he was put into the hypnotic state and while therein given the suggestion to invent plots for his stories, he would be in the position of being able to get to work with renewed vigor. The physician, who is a fine type of man—physically, mentally, and morally—consented to do what he could to help him, and, after a couple of failures, succeeded in putting Morg into the hypnotic state and gave him the asked-for "suggestion," viz.: to invent. And now a curious thing made itself evident. Robertson began "inventing"—not along the line of *literary* but of *scientific* work.

One morning, shortly after his experience with hypnotism, I called and discovered him hard at work on his bathtub table making an elaborate mechanical drawing that would have done credit to an engineering draughtsman, and, with but a nodding acquaintance with geometry, was calmly tackling a problem in optics! He was inventing his periscope for use on submarines.

The periscope lens in general use on submarines (so I am given to understand) is a segment of glass of 60 degrees, which, placed on top of the tube rising perpendicularly out of the submarine, is the "eye" by which (when the submarine is partly submerged) the craft is steered. As 60 degrees will

take in only a certain part of the scene it points at, the lens must be turned to the various points of the compass to " see " the whole horizon. Robertson was engaged in inventing a periscope lens which would take in the whole circular field of 360 degrees at once, a problem others had tackled and given up in despair.

Amazed at the cleverness he displayed in handling strange tools like an expert, I examined the drawing with a critical eye, Morg meanwhile explaining the meaning of the maze of intricate lines. He told me he had run against a snag. The inside curve of his lens did not give the correct shape necessary to reflect the image properly; he said that vaguely humming in his cranium was something that sounded like " kartsun curve," and asked me if I recognized it. He had looked up in his encyclopedia all the words he could think of that sounded anything like " kartsun," but couldn't hit it; I was at a loss to know what he was trying to get at, for while the name had a somewhat familiar sound I couldn't place it, so left him cudgeling his brains over the problem, for I had pressing problems of my own which demanded my attention. However, desiring to help him, I devoted part of that evening to looking through a big dictionary, and after exhausting the " K's " turned to the " C's," with the result that I found the " Cartesian curve " drawn and explained, and which is a curve plotted from three centers and named after the French philosopher Descartes. As I lived some miles away from Robertson I had to wait until the morn-

ing to acquaint him with my discovery. He made a new drawing incorporating this curve, and when he had finished it was satisfied that, theoretically at all events, he had invented that which other inventors had failed on, a perfect periscope lens, and laughingly remarked that in six months he would be cutting coupons (his royalties), with the prospect of being a bloated millionaire and be in a position to help all his "down-and-out" friends, myself included. That was the sailor in him talking, money being of no value to him except to spend on his friends.

He got in touch with the —— Submarine Boat Company, who requested him to communicate immediately with their naval expert, Lieutenant ——, of the United States Navy. This he did, to the joy of the aforesaid lieutenant, who said he had been working on that same problem for three years without success and had given it up in despair in —— (naming a certain month). Morg's curiosity was aroused, and inquiring the exact day the lieutenant had thrown out his chunks of glass models and had given the game up, found that the following day was the day he [Robertson] had had the impulse to take up the problem; which to Morgan's way of thinking was another argument in favor of his pet theory regarding his getting another's "mind-state." I pointed out to him that he should have at the same time gotten the lieutenant's mind-state of despair and relinquishment of the idea, but he couldn't—or wouldn't—see it that way.

The lieutenant's report to the Submarine Boat

Company was so favorable they advanced Robertson $50.00 (if my memory serves me) a week to go ahead and make a working model of his lens. He put the problem of grinding the glass up to one of our large manufacturers of lenses, but when they saw what was required of them, they balked and said they could not do it; that was another setback. Robertson, however, was not the man to give up, and calling on him some days later, I found he had built a rough structure from the top of which hung an arm which carried a weight made of some material necessary to grind the chunk of glass underneath into the semblance of his future lens; he had worked out the problem of this arm swinging so that it would describe the required Cartesian curve. When he had his glass almost ground and ready for polishing, through some unforeseen cause (possibly a flaw in the glass or a sudden change of temperature), the thing cracked, and the result of his weeks of labor was ruined. Nothing daunted, he got another chunk of glass and started all over again. With this second one he was more fortunate and, while not perfectly polished, on being mounted on the end of a mailing tube it gave a fairly clear picture of the surrounding landscape, and showed that the making of a better and perfect periscope lens was but a matter of a more solid apparatus than Morg had made to grind his chunk of glass. The lens was to all intents and purposes an accomplished fact. Robertson was, naturally, delighted with his success, and felt that he saw at last the end of his monetary troubles, but

Fate, in the shape of the United States Patent Office, stepped in and prevented his dream being realized.

As I understood the matter from him, a Frenchman had written, in a French magazine, an article on the periscope lens of the future, pointing out the lines of construction the inventor would have to follow in order to make a perfect panoramic periscope lens. Strangely enough, although Robertson had not even heard of this particular article or magazine (which had appeared some years before), his lens followed the lines of the theoretical one of the Frenchman, and the Patent Office held that no patent could be taken out for Robertson's invention. Although the setback was a serious one, for Robertson was fully convinced his literary work of story-spinning was over forever, his heroic quality of soul was equal to the strain. He put his wasted time, energy, and work on the periscope problem behind him as an unfortunate incident, and again set to work evolving sea-tales.

Mixed up in his thought-currents were a lot of suggestions that came from—he knew not where; and questions regarding chemical rays, heat rays, actinic rays, and such like were hurled at me with a view to finding out what I knew about them. As my professional work had carried me into investigations regarding colored light, some of the questions I could answer and give him more or less definite information on, but most of them were of too abstruse a nature for me to help him. Gradually,

form began to come out of the chaos of suggestions, and then I discovered he was at work inventing an *invisible searchlight.* When he told me what he was doing, I confess I scooted the proposition as being paradoxical, but when he got through explaining his idea I realized that he was on the threshold of an invention that would astound the world and be a powerful factor in banishing war from off the face of the globe. It was one of those simple things that strike us as being remarkable no one had thought of it before, and, although simple, it was an idea that would be incalculable in its far-reaching effects.

He worked out the idea theoretically in a drawing, combining it with his periscope, and it looked most promising until he butted against the usual snag, which, in this case, was the problem of heat in the searchlight. His money problems were such he had to lay his searchlight idea aside, and gradually lost interest in the matter, for apparently the obstacle could not be surmounted, handicapped as he was by lack of technical knowledge. Some years after (last year, to be precise), I told him I thought I had found the solution to that particular problem, and he seemed to think that it would work out successfully, but at that time his health had broken down and he was headed for a hospital. Anyway, his disappointment over the periscope affair had left a deeper wound than he had been willing to admit, and he didn't care to run the risks of again going through the same experience.

Although Robertson respected and admired certain

of the magazine editors, there was a class of editor who—to use a colloquialism—"got his goat," and roused his ire to the *n*th degree. One day last year he came to my studio and told me he had just had a peculiar experience. It seemed he had left the manuscript of a story with a certain metropolitan magazine (which shall be nameless here), and on this particular day he had called to see the editor regarding it. The editor, who was a young callow individual of twenty-odd years, gave the manuscript—which he said he couldn't accept—to Robertson with the remark that as he [Robertson] was evidently trying to make sea-tale writing his line of work he would give him a tip. Pointing to a book standing on his desk, the young editor said he should read it carefully and endeavor to model his style on that man's story. Morg looked at the book indicated and read the title; it was "Sinful Peck," by Morgan Robertson!!! I interrupted Morg's recital of this interview to exclaim: "Oh! what a chance! What *did* you say?" He took his pipe out of his mouth, wiped his lips with his finger, tried to smile his old humorous, quizzical smile—but which was a failure for the experience had cut him to the quick—"I just thanked him and walked out," was all he said. He felt that as such an ignoramus as this pert young chap was in the place of power, and who evidently had not even noticed his name at the top of his manuscript, it was wasting good energy to bandy words with him, so he "just thanked him and walked out."

Talking, as we often did, over the "magazine

game," as we called it, Robertson said that with all his experience he knew no more about what the editors wanted than he did when he first entered the literary field, and instanced a story he had written a couple of years ago on order for a magazine who wanted a "strong" story. He wrote the story, sent it to the editor, who returned it as being unacceptable. Then followed the weary work of trying to sell it to another magazine. It was turned down by every editor he submitted it to except one, who was the editor of the most conservative magazine in the field, and who, in Robertson's mind, would be the most unlikely man to accept it. Without the faintest hope in his heart he sent the manuscript to this particular man, and nearly fell in a faint next day to hear that not only was his story accepted, but that one of the biggest illustrators in the country was to be commissioned to make the pictures for it. When it was published the story made a tremendous sensation in magazine circles, and heartened Robertson to write a story he long had desired, but which he had hitherto been afraid to, fearing it would be *too* strong for salable purposes. He outlined the synopsis of his proposed tale to the magazine that had accepted the one just mentioned, and the editor commissioned him to go ahead and write it. He took as the basis of his tale the well-known case of the *Marie Celeste*, a ship that had sailed for a port which it never arrived at, the only clew to its fate being one of its boats found drifting in the open sea and containing only a chronometer and an oar. The solving of this

mystery of the sea had fascinated him for a long time, so he hailed with delight this commission as being just the chance he wanted.

I happened to visit him as he was completing the manuscript, and read the story while he sat and smoked the pipe of satisfaction, which he well might do, for it was one of the most powerful stories I had ever read. Expressing a desire to have the opportunity of illustrating the story, I was told that he had absolutely no say in the matter but would recommend me to the editor with a view to getting me the job. A couple of days later he told me that his story had been refused as being *too* powerful! As in the other case, he took it the rounds of the magazines. One editor refused it saying that it was too weird and horrible; "Why," said he, "do you know I couldn't go to bed because I had to finish that blamed story and see how it ended!" "Well, I consider it a compliment that a hardened old sinner of an editor like you was interested to the extent that you say," was Robertson's retort. "That's all very well," said the editor, "but my readers would not stand for anything like that." Finally it was landed on a magazine whose owner was interested in an evening paper, which not only reprinted the story but printed almost a column of enthusiastic comment by one of the highest paid editors in New York, who flattered Robertson to the extent of saying that E. A. Poe had written nothing to equal it.

So, year in and year out, Robertson worked, struggling with poverty and the gradual decline of

his physical powers. Blessed with a magnificent constitution and strong vitality which called for an outdoor life, he sapped it by his sedentary work and mode of living; and when later he had to pay the price that Nature demands, he was handicapped by ills of various kinds.

During an attack of inflammatory rheumatism I introduced to him a friend of mine, a physician (and one of the salt of the earth), who went up to Mount Vernon to treat him. My friend found Robertson propped up in bed with his typewriter on a board resting on two uprights to keep the weight of the machine off him, trying to write a story in between the twinges of pain that racked him from head to foot.

Full of failings (like the most of us), yet fuller still of heroic qualities was Morg, for, as he often used to say, he had had the training of a sailor, and, like the sailor, he had the traditional attitude of the seaman, which was to keep on doing the best he could with a stiff upper lip, depending on the Great Pilot that in the end all would be well; which to him was the true heroic attitude. He said, in an unsigned article published in a popular weekly, "I am a sailor"; that utterance meant more than the open-handed generosity of the seafaring man; it meant also the qualities that went to make Morgan Robertson a hero. Here's to you, Morg—HERO!

# THE ART OF MORGAN ROBERTSON

By CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

*The author of the following sketch of Morgan Robertson is the editor of McClure's, and a magazine man of wide experience.*

I KNEW Morgan Robertson, I should say, over a period of about twelve years. When I was at *The Smart Set* he used to bring us stories—stories of power and distinction, but almost always, because of our limited policy, unsuited to our needs. Only on two or three occasions was it possible for us to purchase his manuscripts; and he and I used to laugh and say that it was easy enough for an editor and a contributor to remain friends so long as the former was buying the latter's offerings. But in our case I like to think that Robertson and I understood each other, and so could continue our friendship, even though our business relations were not always as we would have had them.

Looking back now, I begin to realize that Morgan Robertson may have been too great an artist to know much about the magazine markets; and it makes me happy to recall that on several occasions when we guided him to the proper channels for the sale of his work, he met with success, and came back, like a boy, and told us of his achievement.

He was a man not meant to cope with life in a sounding city. He should have lived and worked in the open spaces that he loved, the pages of his manuscript touched by the salt of the sea, or lightly blown by the wind. I never could reconcile that sailor gait of his with Broadway or the corridors of Fifth Avenue hotels. One night I suddenly encountered him in the lobby of the Knickerbocker. The place was thronged, and as we came close to each other in the crowd I heard his deep voice boom: "Towne, be a pickpocket, a murderer, a pirate—but don't you ever trust to mere writing for your living!" And he was gone. Not another word—just that, so amazingly characteristic of the man. He had evidently been holding the thought, alone in that lobby with so many fashionably dressed people around him, and seeing someone he knew, he hurled out just what was on his mind. I was the convenient instrument for his thought's release; and Robertson, the man of monosyllables, knew, I believe, that I would understand his hyperbole, yet grasp the underlying truth of his words.

He *was* pessimistic. He had cause to be. He could write of one big phase of life—a phase through which he had passed with many adventures, and the coldness with which his transcriptions were received at first amused, then appalled, and finally hardened him. He wanted recognition—who does not?—and his failure to gain what he knew was his due embittered him.

He dramatized the submarine; he made the torpedo-

boat literally come ashore for us stay-at-homes. He put the miracle of wireless into his narratives in such a way that a thrill went up your spine as you read. The terrors, not only of the sea, but of that world under the sea, he got on paper with all the power and force of a great writer. He did not like calm and quiet, and he could not get them into his yarns. Man of action, hero and participant in many brave adventures, he loved to record action and tumult; and he had the gift to make another see what he had seen.

I have just been re-reading Clark Russell's "The Frozen Pirate." Admirable as that lonely story is, cold as the ice-bound sea it tells of, I cannot think it as great as any of Robertson's records of the deep. To me, at least, the modernity of our American puts him in a place of his own. That was the big advantage, of course, that he had over Russell, with whom his name will, through necessity, always be linked. He saw in every invention, in every thrilling bit of iron and steel, the material for big plots; and Russell, poet that he was in many a singing phrase, never touched Robertson when it came to a description of burly encounters, or a passage involving some sharp, incisive scene between husky men of the sea. And Robertson had humor—a quaint, wonderful humor. He had the power of making you remember some sudden phrase that he injected, apparently on second thought, to save a highly wrought situation. Take this, from that rattling tale of "The Torpedo." The men aboard are wondering if war has been declared,

and are beside themselves to know if they ought to fire. The suspense is as great as in a Grand Guignol thriller. Then says Robertson:

"And so was reached the decision that sent the *Argyll* into battle, that menaced integrity of boundaries, the ownership of isthmian canals, the peace, the purpose, and the progress of the world for a hundred years—not because England's dignity was in danger, but because Old Man Finnegan got drunk."

I will recall *Finnegan* along with *Mulvaney;* and I venture to say that every devotee of Robertson will do the same.

Crammed with action, crowded with laughter and tears, filled with the peril and purpose of the life he loved, I think Morgan Robertson's sea-tales will live when most others are lost. He wrote nothing of a considerable length—he was essentially a writer in flashes. But who forgets forked lightning against a black sky?

Mr. Howells has said that the reason more short stories are not gathered together in volume form is because the book publishers labor under a delusion that there is no sale for them. True; but short stories as brilliant, as swiftly moving, as climactic as Morgan Robertson's need no apology, no explanation for their appearance between covers. They speak bravely for themselves.

One personal word, and I am done.

When I went to *McClure's* I found Morgan—and I was glad to see his face—sitting at a desk autographing, autographing, autographing. Hundreds

of times a day he was putting his name on the title-page of the uniform edition of his works. I used to speak to him every day; but I was as busy as he in those first few months. I used to say to myself: "Some day soon—to-morrow, I hope—I will have time to ask him to lunch with me, and we will talk over old times and his present happiness." I remarked how well he looked, yet how strangely different. I wanted to get acquainted with him all over again, for some years had elapsed since our last real meeting. I suppose the knowledge that I could ask him any time caused me to postpone my invitation. We have all had that experience.

Then came the day when, a bit broken and tired, he went, unknown to me, to Atlantic City for a rest —his last, indeed. I never saw him again; but a picture of him as a pilot—the best he ever had taken—is on my desk.

Oh, that untasted luncheon with Morgan Robertson! It is like Tennyson's "never-lighted fire." I can never forgive myself; and I shall remember it when many another that I shared with him is forgotten.

# THE MORGAN ROBERTSON I KNEW

By ARTHUR T. VANCE

*The author of the following article, now editor of "Pictorial Review," has the distinction of having accepted for publication more of Morgan Robertson's stories than any other magazine man with the possible exception of George Horace Lorimer, editor of the "Saturday Evening Post." The acceptance of his first story began a friendship that lasted for many years.*

THEY don't make them any more like Morgan Robertson. They have lost the mold, forgotten how, or something. Probably the styles have changed. At any rate, he was unique among present-day writers. He sensed this fact himself. He always seemed to feel that he didn't quite belong to the easy-writing, high-priced author set of to-day, who reap financial rewards from their work in ways unthought of fifteen years ago. Why, when Robertson began to write, one cent a word was real good pay. The main trouble with him was the fact that he never quite got reconciled to the ten and twenty-cent-a-word régime. He didn't think he, or anyone else, as far as that goes, was worth such fancy prices. This is no reflection on his surviving brothers of the pen. They are most of them good fellows, most of them

do good work, all of them are better business men than he. Morgan never had a commercial sense. He didn't know how to barter. When he tried, it was almost humorous, so he generally took the first price offered, and considered himself lucky at that. His best stories—those great romances of the sea that will live and be remembered for years to come—he often sold for a song. I don't think he ever got more than $350 for a story, and that was an event—an epoch, and he thought the editor must have been easy. To-day there are a dozen editors who would pay, and are paying, four times that price for stories that aren't a bit better.

Morgan was about the last of the old-time sea-story writers. He didn't have to dream his salt-water atmosphere. He had lived it. He knew the ropes. He knew every trick and twist of a sailing ship. And when the day of the submarine and battleship came, he learned their innards, too. It was while grinding out a story of a submarine that he came to realize the limitations of the periscope. As soon as the story was off the ways, he started out to invent a better periscope, and he did. He didn't know much about optics and physics, and calculating the curves of lenses required a far greater knowledge of mathematics than he possessed, so he started out to learn. His revised periscope needed a lens ground on a parabolic curve. He wrote to all the leading opticians in the world to make such a lens for him, but found out there weren't any machines in existence to grind a lens on a parabolic curve, so he had

to invent one. In many ways, the months he spent in developing these inventions were the happiest in his life. He quit writing entirely.

And then when he had perfected the periscope, and got it on a working basis, the submarine company had financial troubles, and he never got his reward. He went back to writing, of course, but I don't think he ever had quite the same heart in it—this despite the fact that some of his best stories came after that.

I shall never forget the first Morgan Robertson story I read. It appeared in *Harper's*, I think, and was called "The Derelict Neptune," the first of a series of pseudo-scientific yarns of the sea at which he was such a wonder. This was way back in 1897, as I remember it, when I was the editor of a little magazine up the state. We didn't have much money to buy original stuff, so we used to ask the other magazines to let us reprint their best stories, with credit. I remember I got permission from *Harper's* to reprint "The Derelict Neptune." I wondered how they came to say yes so readily, and found out afterward that the sea captain with whom Robertson had first gone to sea still lived in my town and Robertson was glad to have the story printed in the local magazine, so as to show him what his old ship's boy could do. A year or so afterward, when I moved to New York and brought the magazine with me (it didn't take up very much room), Robertson looked me up, and thus began a warm friendship which lasted throughout all these years.

Lord! How Robertson did hate that old sea

captain! He said he starved him, treated him like a dog, and stunted his growth. He was the prototype of all the "bucko mates" and "hell-ship captains" that Robertson was so fond of depicting. Yet—and this shows the big heart of the man—when this sea captain died a few years back, the editor of my home-town paper asked me to get Robertson to write a little something about his recollection of the man. Robertson was busy on a story at the time, and he needed money, but he stopped work and wrote gratis a two-thousand word appreciation of this youthful enemy of his that was a model of Christian charity—not a word of bitterness in it. In its way, it was one of the finest bits of writing he ever did.

It was never easy for Morgan to write. I have seen him sit at his typewriter by the hour waiting for the right word to come. The consequence was that when the manuscript left his typewriter it was finished, but it was the hardest kind of mental effort for him. This necessitated his giving up trying to write home, and taking a little studio down on Twenty-fourth Street. It was a little studio—a gem in its way. I don't think it was as big as the proverbial hall bedroom, about ten feet long by seven feet wide. In this tiny room he had everything that was necessary to housekeeping. Let's see if I can remember it. Back of the door, as you opened it, was a gas stove and a clothes closet. Then came a sleeping sofa, a chair by the one window, then down the other side was a hand basin, a bathtub which he installed himself (he had a wooden cover for this and used

it for a table), and then came a typewriter and desk, a sectional bookcase, and in the center was a little table. The whole room was fixed up like a ship's cabin, with fancy knots and door pulls, cabin lights, and in fact he had everything ship-shape but a rudder and side lights, and I knew he would have had these if he had had room to hang them. Here is where most of his big stories were written, in this tiny little room looking over the back yards of some old-fashioned houses toward Broadway. Here he "doctored up" those famous welsh-rabbits of his that never got stringy, for the inner circle of his friends. He was just as proud of those rabbits as of the best story he ever wrote.

Writing wasn't the natural life for Robertson. He was full-blooded, strong as a bull, with a 46-inch chest, better fitted for an outdoor career. Writing made him nervous and fidgety. Sometimes he would get so on edge that he couldn't write at all, and then he used to dress up and stand on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Twenty-third Street and watch the shoppers go by. This soon grew into a habit. If you wanted Robertson around three or four o'clock in the afternoon, here was the place to find him. He said it rested his brain and gave him inspiration.

One summer Mrs. Robertson closed up their apartment up-town and took a vacation in the country, leaving Morgan to take care of the family cat at the studio. Now a Twenty-fourth Street studio isn't exactly the best place to keep track of a strange cat, and so it proved. Despite Morgan's careful

watching, the cat crept out and disappeared. He told me he spent the whole night looking for it, had the police on the job, and even asked the aid of the fire department, and finally inspected every tree in Madison Square to find that cat. He never found it. But he was so upset that he couldn't work for a couple of days.

Another time he came to me with the proposal to make some fancy sailor knots. He said he wanted to do it just for the fun of it, to rest his nerves. He thought it would be good stuff to run on the boys' page of *The Woman's Home Companion*, of which I was then the editor. It sounded good to me, and he went ahead and made some of the most wonderful knots I have ever seen. I am treasuring some of them home now.

It was about this time that I bought "The Chemical Comedy," which, I believe, was the first of the famous "Finnegan" stories. The rest of the staff didn't think "The Chemical Comedy" was quite the story for a woman's magazine. Possibly it wasn't, but I took a chance, and now I am glad I did.

We used to have great discussions about his interest in psychic things—hypnotism, telepathy, sub-conscious mind, and all that sort of thing. I never took much stock in the occult, but here is a strange thing. The same time Morgan made those fancy sailor knots for me, he braided me a watch fob out of a leather shoe string. It was a gem of its kind, with all sorts of fancy twists and turns and decorative knots that only a real old-time sailor knows how to make. I

wore this watch fob daily for ten years; yet when I got back to the office after attending his funeral at The Little Church Around the Corner, the watch fob broke. Just a coincidence, of course, but it made me wonder.

Poor old Morgan! He never got his reward. If he could only have lived to reap the benefits of his moving-picture rights, and from the remarkable sale of his collected works! It was the kind of prosperity he had always dreamed about; yet he had to die just as the dream was about to be realized. It is a queer fact, but as true as the hills, that a man in the literary game has to die before folks really begin to realize how big he was. Now that Morgan is dead and gone, everybody is glad to say they knew him. I am, I know—and I always was.

# THE PSYCHIC MYSTERY OF HIS TIME

By HENRY W. FRANCIS

*The following article was written by a journalist and an admirer of Morgan Robertson. It shows that side of Morgan Robertson which was unknown to his many readers and which was the subject of much debate among his friends. This article was originally published in the Philadelphia "Public Ledger."*

ONE night, forty years ago, as the brig *Palmetto,* bound, lumber-laden, to New York from Fernandina, lay becalmed off the Charleston Light, Morgan Robertson spun his first yarn. One day last week as the ebb tide washed the Atlantic City sands he spun the last.

Both were told to the sea alone. To the first story, a painstaking recital of "The Tempest," studiously memorized, the *Palmetto's* crew paid no attention. For the last—a story of a broken spirit—the world had no ears.

And so Morgan Andrew Robertson, sailor, jeweler's errand runner, clock repairer, diamond-cutter, inventor, and foremost American sea-story writer of the generation, died as he had wished, standing up, his "last breath a salty one."

He was the psychic mystery of the decade. An unlettered sailor, he grinned at the grammarians and

wrote " Sinful Peck," a marvel of precise English and inimitable style; awed by the subtleties of long division he nevertheless smiled at the savants, solved problems in a few weeks with which they had struggled vainly for years and invented his improved periscope. Knowing nothing of the properties of light, he stirred the scientific world with the " invisible searchlight."

His paradoxical personality amazed all who knew him, but no more than it astounded Robertson himself until he postulated an explanatory theory to which he held until his death.

He implicitly believed that some discarnate soul, some spirit entity with literary ability, denied physical expression, had commandeered his body and brain for the purpose of giving to the world the literary gems which made him famous.

He regarded himself as a mere amanuensis, the tool of " a real writer," whose shadowy fingers could not grasp the pen and grip the multitude with the adventures of a Finnegan or a Captain Bilke. In his rôle as inventor, Robertson regarded himself as a laboratory underling, whose ears happened to be sensitive enough to hear the whispered orders of a " master " in the Great Silence beyond.

And " Morg," as his intimates knew him, rebelled against the order of things.

" I am a sailor who has been transformed into a writer, inventor, and several other things," he said shortly before his death, " but now I feel myself going —slipping back to the sea where I belong—getting back to the old mental state, but without the old

physical state to back it up. From the deck I was put at the desk, from the desk I was shoved into the laboratory, then I slipped back to the desk, and now—now I've slipped back to the sea."

Radical as was Robertson's theory, it was borne out by his life and method of work. For months at a time, although mentally alert, he was incapable of correctly writing a single sentence. Every mail would bring editorial injunctions to "please hurry" manuscripts already ordered or to submit others, together with "final" requests to "please remit and obviate the necessity of legal action."

Robertson, torn by the impossibility of acquiescence to either, and the even more pressing problem of providing food for himself, would pace his cabin studio pleading with his astral helper until patience languished and then the "psychic partner" would be showered with all the fiery imprecations ever wafted over the seven seas.

Life was hard for Robertson at such times and he would sink to the lowest depths of depression. Obdurate landlords, dunning creditors, supersympathetic acquaintances and heavy-footed messengers from insistent editors were the bane of his existence.

A stout Chubb lock on his studio door was his salvation. Sheltered behind it, he was always "out" to the uninitiated, while the initiated knew he was not "at home."

For weeks he would wrestle with his "mind states" in this manner, and then, suddenly, a muffled gatling-gunning sound would stir the silence of the

studio halls. Robertson's old, very old typewriter was being manipulated at high speed. Finnegan was adventuring. Morgan was at work.

Such spurts of effort would last from two days to a week or more, and during some of them Robertson would write two or three stories.

His " Ghost of the Gun Deck " was written in an afternoon. At one o'clock he was prone on his " bunk," without an idea—without a hope. At six o'clock he was in a gilded restaurant radiating prosperity and " eating up the gundeck " as he put it.

Once started, he wrote rapidly, unhesitatingly, as writes a stenographer taking dictation. One story finished, he would often immediately start another, not pausing until the end was reached. Sometimes, however, he would arise from his lethargy with a start, rush to his typewriter and—write next—no clew to the climax of a false alarm.

Not infrequently a story half-done would remain so for weeks, Robertson declaring he had no idea what to write next—no clew to the climax of the tale.

Needing the money which the story completed would bring he attempted once to finish one without the help of his astral " boss." The result was absolute failure. Misspelled and amateurish, the " uninspired " addition had nothing in common with the rest of the story. Morgan never tried again to write " alone."

# MORGAN ROBERTSON, THE MAN

By BOZEMAN BULGER

*The following sketch of Morgan Robertson was originally published in the "Metropolitan." Mr. Bulger is the Baseball Editor of the New York "Evening World." In the most trying years of his career, he was Mr. Robertson's dependable friend. In appreciation of what he had done, Morgan Robertson bequeathed to Mr. Bulger a scarf-pin that O. Henry, dying, had given to the sailor-author.*

A PEN picture of Morgan Robertson would be as inadequate as a photograph, and I shall not attempt it. Portraits of him hang in nearly every magazine office in the country, and yet not one of them conveys any idea to the casual visitor as to just what kind of a man he was. They show the contour of his strong, square-jawed face, a fixed expression and—that's all.

No portrait and no pen picture could comprehensively describe Morgan Robertson's intense masculinity; that twinkling expression in his eyes, changing to one of ferocity as his mind flitted from one phase of a subject to another. Nothing could describe his vanity and pride of accomplishment, even while relating a tale of personal woe. A mental picture of this remarkable man is next to im-

possible unless you knew him in life and associated with him frequently. His gruffness, for instance, was one of his charms.

Try to think of Robertson as a sailor. If you know sailors, that will suffice. He was of a short, stocky build that carried with it an expression of great muscular strength. He walked like a sailor, talked like a sailor, and thought like a sailor. And he was partially bald, if that helps.

No matter how painstaking his efforts, Morgan Robertson's clothes never appeared to fit. His squatty, and still angular, figure was no boon to a tailor. To him the blending of shades of color in dress meant nothing. With a black suit he would wear a waistcoat of brocaded tan, if it happened to be the most convenient, and the necktie might have been maroon, old rose, green or blue, for all he cared.

At the same time, as incongruous as it may seem, Robertson was intensely fond of good clothes. He doted on expensive overcoats and velour hats. He would spend his last cent on either of these articles and walk home, no matter if the distance was five miles.

A few weeks before his sudden death at Atlantic City, where he had gone to rest and build up, Robertson came to see me one night with the gladsome news that his books were beginning to sell and that already his royalties had amounted to nearly five hundred dollars. For two years prior to this he had not earned as much as twenty-five dollars a week and was penniless.

"They are going to advance me $200 to-morrow," he told me, and his plans for disposing of that money were as enthusiastic as those of a schoolboy.

His first expenditures were $2.50 for a pair of shoes, $12 for a velour hat and $115 for an overcoat!

That overcoat, by the way, he exhibited along Broadway with the greatest pride, and it was not fur, either. It was with utmost care that he laid it across his arm as he started for Atlantic City. He also bought a cane. Being fifty-four years old, and having suffered exposure at sea, he was troubled with rheumatism at times and explained that, fearing another attack, he might need the stick in walking. His friends—those who loved him—accepted the unnecessary explanation with a smile, knowing full well his delight in twirling a cane as he called on the editors to tell them of his new prosperity.

Though he had a keen sense of humor, Morgan Robertson, in temperament, was either hard or harder. There was little of tenderness in him. His masculinity forbade that. He could be generous, kind, and fair, but never tender. His love was permanent and his hate undying. Morgan Robertson talked in a deep bass voice that reverberated about the room in a way to make one picture him on the deck of a ship giving orders through a megaphone.

Robertson began to write, not for the love of it, but because he got the impression, after reading one of Kipling's stories, that it was an easy way to make money. At first he knew nothing of style or diction, but having a sea-tale in mind that he thought might

be worth some money, he sat down and wrote it on the top of a washtub—the kind used in New York flats. This story was "The Survival of the Fittest," and it came close to being a sea masterpiece.

Morgan Robertson always regretted a lack of education and was doubtful of his literary English. As a matter of fact, from studious reading, he was better educated than the average writer, and an editor described his English to me one day as "ninety-nine per cent pure."

Though a sailor by instinct and a lover of all things Bohemian, Robertson was extremely painstaking in his study of a subject before he undertook to embody it in a story. It was through his determined efforts and long study to get things right that he incurred his well-known enmity toward magazine editors in general. There were a few editors—a very few—that he regarded great men, but his dislike for the others was absolutely sincere. It was not assumed for the purpose of amusing his hearers, though it usually had that effect. He could never reconcile the idea of a young editor, just out of college, perhaps, glancing over his manuscript carelessly and turning it down with the comment that the situations therein described were impossible. On some of these situations the writer probably had spent weeks. Robertson was a very slow writer and seldom ever turned out more than one story a month.

On one occasion when he lived near me he began to develop a story that dealt with a subject

scientific and technical. He had not studied physics or chemistry and was not quite sure of his ground. Seeing but one way out of the difficulty, he tossed aside the few pages of manuscript, went downtown and purchased a text-book on physics—Steele's, I believe it was—and studied it diligently for more than a month. At the end of that time he had a rather thorough idea of the principles of physics and resumed his story. In the meantime, the story and the pay therefor having been delayed, he had done without things to eat, so determined was he to be technically correct.

"Then," he said to me as he returned from a magazine office in thorough disgust and disheartened, "a little popinjay of an editor returns my manuscript because he doubts the correctness of my theories."

Later the story was accepted by another magazine and attracted wide attention.

"It is not my contention," he remarked to a party of us one night, while in one of his rampant moods, "that an editor should be able to read Latin and Greek and understand the sciences, but I do contend," and he slapped his fist on the table with a resounding whack, "that he should be able to read and write."

After he had been writing awhile, Morgan Robertson took up the study of psychology and became obsessed with some very queer theories. To him there were no such things as coincidences. All those he could trace to "psychic telepathy." He

firmly believed that the editors had a sub-conscious enmity toward him and that preyed on his mind until he felt that it would be impossible for him to get fair treatment in the consideration of his writings.

The editors understood these whims and eccentricities of Robertson and, realizing that it would be impossible to disabuse his mind of such ideas, humored him as best they could. As a matter of fact, most all editors liked Morgan Robertson, despite his belligerent attitude toward them, but try as I would, I could never convince him of their friendship.

This great narrator of sea-tales was under no misapprehension as to the quality of his work. It was good, and he knew it, and at no time would he hesitate to so express himself. As a matter of fact, even during his long spell of misfortune and poverty, Robertson was very vain.

He knew that rival writers occasionally took his themes or plots and revamped them into other forms, and at this he would fly into indignant rage.

"Yes, and they are rewriting my stories and selling them for two and three hundred dollars, when the best I could get for the original was sometimes less than one hundred," he would declare with vehemence. Vehemence in Robertson meant more than in the ordinary person. With that powerful voice and equally powerful fist he could emphasize a point in a most convincing manner.

Even while in belligerent moods it was his utter candor that made Morgan Robertson amusing to his

friends. Though vain and proud over his writings, he would explain in detail domestic hardships with no apparent embarrassment.

One night he called to borrow a dollar, explaining that he had walked all the way because he had no carfare. He candidly told me that there had not been a penny in his home for two days and that he had been unable to establish credit or find friends.

"How did you eat?" I asked him.

"We had ordered some chopped meat for my wife's collie," he said, "and as it was excellent meat I acted with a firm hand and decided that dog should eat dog biscuit, regardless of consequences, until I could get downtown. I took that meat and made one of the finest dishes of Hungarian goulash that you ever tasted. By the way," he added, "you want to learn how to make that." Then he carefully explained the method of preparing his favorite dish. (The recipe is given with others at the end of this volume for the benefit of those who may enjoy his stories.)

When Robertson's first book was published and had appeared on sale in the larger bookstores, his pride knew no bounds. In later years he often told of how this pride was given a severe and unexpected jolt.

Armed with a cane and attired in what he regarded as very stylish clothes, the author visited the best known bookstore in New York and stood around for a few moments expecting to be the recipient of many congratulations. He was smoking that old pipe, so familiar to his acquaintances—he always smoked it—

and asked casual questions, awaiting the dénouement of his visit. Presently an important looking young lady spied him and came down the aisle as if to offer the congratulations that he expected. His chest expanded and then fell.

"You'll have to throw that pipe away if you remain in here," she said to him. "Smoking is not allowed—especially pipes."

Robertson could never be persuaded to enter that store again. Not only had he not been recognized, but he had been insulted, according to his way of thinking.

Though fourteen volumes of the Robertson books were published at intervals, it is one of those peculiar caprices of fate that none of them sold until a short time before his death, when they were republished in a uniform edition.

With a grim touch of humor, Mr. Robertson had framed a statement he received from his publishers two years ago. Just one copy of "Sinful Peck" had been sold that month, and his royalty check was for $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents.

Morgan Robertson was intensely proud and would accept no charity, though he would borrow money in small sums. I have in my possession now a memorandum book which he left. In it are the names of more than twenty persons who had advanced him small amounts on various occasions, some of them as low as twenty-five cents. None are higher than five dollars. It was his earnest wish, in case of his

death, that these be paid out of his royalties, which will be done, provided the creditors will accept.

I have never seen Robertson show emotion but once. His iron will held back any display of helplessness.

Knowing that he needed at least $150 to be made comfortable, temporarily, Irvin S. Cobb and myself made a tour of the clubs and other places where writers and theatrical people gather. We assessed each man five dollars and thirty of them responded—in fact, everybody that we asked. Many of them had never known Robertson, but admired his writings and were glad to contribute to what we had to call a loan so that it would be accepted.

Very cautiously I had to explain to the old author that these men, knowing that he was temporarily embarrassed, had asked that he accept this loan until he was on his feet.

"Let me see the names," he demanded.

Some of them he did not know, but as his eyes glanced over the list he turned away and his shoulders shook. Morgan Robertson was actually crying!

"I never thought that my friends would have to take up a collection for me," he said. "But give me that list," he added, his old-time vigor returning, "and I'll see that every one of them is paid."

While he was in the hospital a little later on he wrote me a note in which he said that he realized these men would never take the money or, perhaps, he would never be able to pay it.

"If I should not get well," he added, "I want

each of them to be presented with an autographed set of my books. That, I believe, will square the debt, and at the same time they will have something to remind them of how grateful I was."

In the course of his psychic studies Morgan Robertson had acquired a belief that he would some day go insane. This preyed on his mind so, at intervals, that he would figure out schemes to test himself and determine if he really had lost his mind.

We finally induced him to go to Bellevue Hospital, mainly for a rest.

With a cunning that was as amusing as it was pathetic, he took advantage of it in a way least expected. He insisted on going alone.

Arriving there, he told the physician in charge of his belief that he would some day go insane. He would give no particulars and that explained why none of us heard from him for two weeks. They had placed him in the psychopathic ward!

It was a week before he knew that they thought him an insane patient and had him under observation. The experience thoroughly cured him of his morbid belief—fad, it really was.

Upon his discharge from the hospital Robertson walked across the street to a saloon, ordered a drink of whiskey and paid for it. He then deliberately poured the whiskey into a cuspidor and started to walk away. The bartender looked at him in astonishment.

"What's the matter with you?" the barman demanded to know. "Ain't that whiskey all right?"

"I just wanted to test my will power," Robertson replied.

"There's a hospital for lunatics across the street," suggested the boniface. "Maybe you'd better go over and test that. You're off your nut."

With a triumphant smile Morgan then drew from his pocket a certificate, showing that he was of sound mind.

He was very proud of that certificate and exhibited it frequently.

About this time there appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* an anonymous autobiography called "Gathering No Moss." It was the life of Morgan Robertson written in the first person. It attracted such attention to his years of struggling as an author that a movement was started to publish his stories in a uniform set of books.

The books began to sell immediately and Robertson's troubles were nearly over.

One afternoon, as this era of prosperity was dawning, Robertson joined a party of us in a billiard-room where one of his friends had just won the tournament cup. A dozen or more were sitting at a round table, drinking out of the cup to celebrate the victory. Morgan sat down and took a sip of the wine.

"How goes it, Morgan?" one of his friends inquired.

"Boys," he announced in that bellowing bass voice, "I'll never have to write another line. I'm no longer a slave to magazine editors. My books are selling

and I have here "—he reached into an inside pocket —" a certificate showing that I am not insane." He was deadly serious.

A few of the party, unfamiliar with the eccentricities of Robertson, began to edge away. To them it was uncanny.

" Still," one of them suggested in a side whisper, " he's got something on us at that. We've got no certificate."

Robertson overheard the remark and laughed heartily. He often related that incident as his one best joke.

As Morgan Robertson grew older his longing to go back to the sea was intensified. He got out his papers as first mate and was prepared in case an opportunity should arise.

One of the most satisfying incidents of his late days was the taking of a moving picture with him at the wheel of a big sailing vessel. He had sold one of his sea stories to the picture concern and it was a condition that he had to appear in it personally. Such a provision, in writing, was unnecessary. He was delighted.

The photograph of Robertson at the wheel, in his shirt sleeves, which was sent to friends all over the country, was absolutely the best likeness of him ever taken. His whole spirit was in that photograph and he never tired of looking at it. He would have lived on that boat continuously if the owners had so desired.

The gradually increasing sale of his books enlivened

Robertson's spirits wonderfully, but he was not well physically. He found great difficulty in sleeping. He began to look haggard and worn.

It was suggested that the old writer take a trip to Atlantic City, where he could rest up and get strong.

At first Robertson would not go without his wife, but she finally persuaded him that it would be better for him to go alone so that he could make arrangements for her to join him later.

He went away carrying that precious overcoat across his arm and in his hand was a cane. On his head was the slouch hat that he loved.

That was the last his friends saw of him.

They found Morgan Robertson dead, standing almost erect with his hand resting on the side of an oak dresser. Near him was an open window through which came a breeze from the Atlantic.

It has pleased me to think that, when the hand of death struck him, he was looking out at the sea. I know that is the way Morgan Robertson would have liked to die.

# MORGAN ROBERTSON

## By ARTHUR B. MAURICE

*The following article originally appeared as an editorial in "The Bookman." It contains an interesting appreciation of the sincerity of Morgan Robertson's work. In all his efforts, as a sailor and a skilled mechanic, and later as a writer, Morgan Robertson showed a painstaking thoroughness that was notable for its rarity in a hurly-burly world.*

IN the daily papers of March 25, 1915, there appeared a news story telling how Morgan Robertson, the writer of sea stories, had been found dead leaning against a bureau in a hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Just a year before, almost to a day, there had been printed in the *Saturday Evening Post* of Philadelphia an article entitled "Gathering No Moss," which told with pathetic detail all the complications, the ennuis, the disappointments, and heartaches of the writer's life. So effective was the article in its tragic simplicity that it brought responses from all parts of the country. Here was a man reduced almost to penury, not because he lacked either talent or industry, but through a congenital inability to retain what he had won. The case was so clear, it recalled so pitiably the traditions of the Grub Street of other days. "Can't you do something?"

wrote one novelist very near the apex among contemporary American story-tellers. "It wouldn't be a pity if he weren't the real thing; readers are missing something. It isn't sensible that he should be left out." Something was done, and it is pleasant to recall that the last twelve months of his life were far happier in reward and recognition than the preceding years had been. But want and physical suffering had exacted their toll. The respite was only respite.

The Bohemia which Morgan Robertson knew and in which he suffered was not confined to city attics. It was a Bohemia of far horizons. With that Bohemia he threw in his lot when, as a lad of sixteen, he ran away to sea, fired by an ambition to be first mate. His father was a captain on the Great Lakes, but he had wished his son to follow the career of a landsman. But Morgan's mind was made up, and, leaving his home in New York State, he found his way to the seacoast and shipped as cabin-boy and general fag, doing his own and everyone else's work at the gentle urging of fists and belaying pins. Twice round the world he sailed, shipping with all sorts of crafts, from sailing vessels to transatlantic liners, until his early ambition to become first mate was finally realized. During that period he had most of the adventures which befell his heroes. Sometimes he was half-starved, and more than once he had hair-breadth escapes from death; while his exploits fighting bullies would make reading more interesting than polite. Once he went ashore, disgusted with sea-

faring, and became a cowboy on the plains. Then he drifted to sea again, and for a time was skipper of a millionaire's yacht. Once he taught young ladies how to swim, and once he even thought he was an Anarchist. But nobody believed him.

By this time Morgan Robertson's illusions were all gone. The futureless life of the sailor appealed less and less to him. One day he rolled into the office of a phrenologist to have his "bumps" read. The phrenologist said he was "constructive," and urged him to learn a trade. The sailor looked about him, and decided to become a watchmaker. When he learned that he could wear a white shirt all day while at work he apprenticed himself on the spot. The ambition to be first mate transformed itself into a dogged determination to become an expert artisan. The watchmaker's apprentice became a diamond and pearl setter, earning expert's wages. When, from constant chiseling of bright metals, his eyes gave out, he turned to writing, and almost instinctively to the sea for inspiration. His first effort, however, was a poem, now dead, for which he cherished an unusual tenderness. Then grimly he settled down to the construction of his tales of life in strange scenes. But at first success was slow in coming.

Once, during his darkest days of publisher hunting, after one of his best stories had been returned with regret, Robertson went in despair to his old "shop" in the diamond district of New York City to ask for work. An order had come in that needed the finest and most delicate workmanship—a necklace

of diamonds. The writer took the little packet of diamonds and tramped home with them, as he had tramped down to the shop—for reasons of economy. Weary and worn, his brain seething with the adventures of that other struggle whose story, "The Survival of the Fittest," he afterward wrote, the dim-eyed artisan set to work. All night he cut and engraved, growing blinder every hour, but sticking to the task until the diamonds were one line of shining white before him, without form or meaning. The last few stones were set by feeling alone. The stone was worked into place, the tool, dipped in turpentine to make the cutting bright, did the delicate chiseling guided by instinct. In the morning Robertson took the necklace back to the shop, almost certain that he had wrought its ruin. To his amazement, it was passed from hand to hand—a perfect piece of work. Then the man who had toiled all night went home to write about a ship's carpenter who brought the ship to port in the teeth of a gale, despite the fact that he knew nothing about navigation.

# THE MAN I KNEW

## By GRACE MILLER WHITE

*The writer of the following reminiscences is the author of "Tess of the Storm Country," one of the recent best sellers and a big success when dramatized for the movies. Miss White writes of the days when both she and Morgan Robertson were struggling for recognition. Womanlike she remembers the softer side of the gruff sailor-author, which is the least known to many of his friends.*

THIS was the man who died with his boots on, as he had often hoped and prayed that he would, and many's the man and woman living to testify to his generosity and manliness. I recall now episodes of his charity during my studio life, and at that time, for him to extend charity to others, was to take bread out of his own mouth.

I remember one winter morning Morgan came to me and asked me if I would make him some coffee. He looked rather seedy and tired, and while preparing him some breakfast, I listened to his night's experience.

It seems the night before, a terrible blizzard had struck New York, and Morgan had just settled down to his inevitable baked beans and coffee. His studio, by the way, was a very small one. In one corner he

had a cot at the foot of which was a gas stove, the conventional size, oven and all. Near the gas stove on the other side of the door was the telephone. Opposite the cot was a large bath-tub Morgan had purchased from a second-hand man, and being somewhat of a plumber, had rigged up a shower. He often said that every one of those cold water showers added minutes and days to his life. At any rate, this wild night he sat eating his beans and drinking his coffee, when a timid knock on his studio door interrupted him. Opening it, he saw a slip of a girl, a model by trade, standing before him, drenched to the skin.

At Morgan's gruff "Come in!" she stumbled into the room and burst out crying.

"What's the matter?" demanded the man. "Come on! shut up now! be a sport! eat some beans."

After the tears were dried and the small model had partaken of the ever-ready beans and coffee, she told her simple tale of deprivation, and this was it:

"I've no home nor any bed to sleep in to-night."

And that was all.

Then, Morganlike, the Man sucked on his old pipe and blew out rings of heavy tobacco smoke until the studio was one gray mist. Perhaps through the smoke some way to help the mite would present itself, or a way to find another bed would loom out of the night; and so the model sat and waited and Morgan sat and puffed, and the blizzard outside raged in greater fury.

After a while Morgan said, "Take off your shoes

and stick your feet in the oven. They must be cold. . . . Here, wait a minute. I'll take out the beans." This done, the small red feet were wrapped in an old shawl and put into the gas oven.

"It feels so good," sighed the model.

"You bet," answered Morgan.

And then once more they sat in silence, miles of smoke coming from the old man's pipe. After an hour or so Morgan came to a conclusion.

"Guess I won't sleep here to-night."

"Where will you sleep?" asked the girl.

"Oh, I don't know. A man, you see, can sleep most anywhere, but I was thinking I'd find a bed, and you just tote off your clothes after I'm gone and go to sleep. You're tired, ain't you?"

"Yes, awful tired," answered the mite.

"All right then," soothed the Man. "I'm going to go now. Here, I'll take another bean and another drink of coffee. Pretty bad outside. What you crying for?"

"I s'pose it's because you're so awful good to me. I think I'd have frozen if I'd stayed out any longer, and I'm so tired."

"Well, then, shut up, and I'll climb out and you get in bed."

And Morgan, suiting the action to his words, placed his fingers on the handle of the door. "But I'll tell you one thing, Miss, I don't want you hanging around my studio after nine o'clock to-morrow morning. Do you hear?"

"Yes," murmured the girl sleepily. "I'll sure be out by nine o'clock."

Then Morgan went out into the hall, and closed the door. Suddenly he turned back and knocked.

"Oh, I was going to tell you something," said he, as the door opened. "Of course if it's terrible cold out in the morning,—I mean about nine,—you could stay a bit and wait until the blizzard's over. . . . That's all."

And the door closed again, and Morgan, the Man, went out into the blizzard. He stood still on the street for a few moments wondering where he was going. He had no money and no friends any better off than himself. But he suddenly remembered an artist who worked on Madison Avenue and sometimes this friend stayed in his studio all night instead of going to his country place. So Morgan plowed his way through the snow to Madison Avenue, which was a long walk (Morgan never had carfare) and mounting the five flights of stairs, to his friend's studio, he knocked on the door. He knocked once, and he knocked twice; three times; four times; and five times. And then hearing a sound within, he knew his friend was there. The door opened just a crack. The artist spoke before Morgan had a chance.

"Don't make a noise," he said, softly. "My wife and kid are down to-night and they are both asleep. They came in town to shop and the blizzard lasted so long they stayed here with me."

So the Man went down the five flights of stairs with

no idea where he was going to spend the night. It was impossible to escape the eyes of the burly policeman in such a storm, for no matter how poor the pedestrian was, he always had the appearance of hurrying home. But Morgan had no home, so he did not appear to hurry. The policeman demanded of him a reason why he was out in the storm, and threatened to arrest him if he did not "move along quick." But Morgan had no place to move. Besides, he was very cold. So because he was sure that he might buck up against this same cop again, he said,

"Got a studio over here on 21st Street, but somebody is in it."

"That's a likely story," answered the policeman. "I got to have proof that you ain't hanging around to carry out some job. Guess I better run you in."

Morgan thought a minute, and then told the story of how he had been to a friend's house on Madison Avenue and that he thought he could go back there for proof that he was of honorable intentions. This satisfied the policeman, so together they went to the Madison Avenue address and once more Morgan assailed his friend's studio door. This time no answer came, and after much knocking, the policeman took him by the arm and walked him downstairs.

"I knew you was stringing me," he said gruffly. "You come along with me now."

And for a little while Morgan did walk along with him, his thoughts busy with the predicament in which he found himself. Then he stopped.

"I don't blame you," he began, "for running me in, for the story I told you is about the lamest thing a man ever put over, but I was just wondering if you would come along with me to my studio and I'd prove what I said to you."

"Sure," said the cop. "I'd like to have you prove to me that you're on the level," and so they turned their faces the other way and went slowly through the blizzard to Morgan's building and were soon standing in front of his studio door. It was then that Morgan spoke in a very low tone.

"The kid that's sleeping in here is a bit of a girl without a house or home, and I s'pose probably she's dead to the world, and I was wondering if I just opened up the door and you peeked in and saw her if that would be enough for you to let loose your hold on me?"

"Sure," said the cop. "Open her up."

So Morgan took out his key and dextrously threw back the lock without a sound. And then he said, "I know she's in there, and there ain't no use in my looking in, so you peek in and satisfy yourself."

This the policeman did, and his head came back as quickly as it had been shoved through the aperture. Then Morgan softly closed the door.

"She's there, all right," said the policeman in a very thick voice. "Now I'd like to know what in hell you're going to do. Ain't you got any money?"

"No," said Morgan. "Haven't got a cent."

"You can't stay out in a blizzard all night even if you have done a good deed. And I don't like to

rush you in as a vagrant either, so I guess it's up to me to let you have fifty cents and you can get a bed with that."

Then Morgan smiled one of his wide, broad smiles and stuffed his old pipe full of tobacco and replied:

"I don't want fifty cents. Twenty-five will get me a good bed,—as good as any sailor ever slept on, and that's good enough for me."

And so the two, the officer of the law and the Man, went down the long flights of stairs and out into the blizzard again where, in one of the many cheap hotels, Morgan found a twenty-five-cent bed, and the policeman went back to his beat.

As Morgan told me this story, he continued it thus:

"I went to my door a minute ago and rapped, and by ginger, she's still breathing deep and the fact is I thought I'd let her sleep a while. It's still snowing, and I thought you'd give me a cup of coffee and a piece of bread. I got plenty of beans in there all right, but——"

"Of course you can have all you want to eat, Morgan," I replied, very near tears, for it seemed to me as he told this simple tale it showed the solid character of the old sea-story writer more than any other thing could do.

Morgan believed he had many enemies, and especially did this belief grow in the last few years of his life. A small compliment, especially if paid by a woman, would raise his spirits to bounding point. It might be interesting to read the man's idea of

wooing a woman. In spirit, Morgan was born about a thousand years too late; in genius, possibly at the right time, or a little too early. He could never figure out why a man should be compelled to woo a woman in the ordinary, civilized way. In Morgan's idea, a man was a superior, dignified being, and in every way more highly developed than a woman. If by chance he made this argument of man's superiority to some person who cared enough to combat him, he would haul out an old weather-beaten Bible and hunt through its pages until he had found some verse which held up as a beacon light to the world the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. I can remember his using some pretty strong words to me at times trying to persuade me that every man was pre-eminently superior to every woman, and one day in a great rage he expressed his views thus:

"I believe," said he, "that the good old days when a man made his cave, slung on the floor the skin of a beast, and roasted over the fagots its flesh, and then went to his neighbor's house to find the woman upon whom he had centered his affections and took her back with him by force will return again before many years have passed by." Morgan informed me that if the woman did not smile upon the cave-man's suit, that made no difference at all, nor would it make any difference to Morgan if he had lived in those days, for he said to me, straight-eyed and with a firm setting of that bull-dog mouth, "I believe that a woman likes a man much better if he knocks her down now and then and gives her a whipping and then makes

love to her afterwards, than she does if he follows the beaten path of civilization."

At this point I ventured, "Is that the way you woo women, Morgan?"

"No," said he, sighing deeply, "I don't know how to woo 'em and I never have known how."

# MORGAN ROBERTSON'S FAMOUS RECIPES

*Reference is made, in some of the foregoing memoirs, to Morgan Robertson's famous dishes prepared by him in his studio cabin, which was the scene of many a midnight banquet. As a result of considerable searching and with the help of Mrs. Robertson we are able to present to admirers of Morgan Robertson recipes for some of the well-known dishes that friends of Morgan Robertson enjoyed in the good old days. We publish these feeling that many readers will be glad to avail themselves of some of the dishes that made Morgan Robertson's reputation as a cook par excellence in New York's Bohemia.*

## BAKED BEANS

SORT and soak beans overnight. In morning parboil with a large piece of salt pork. When considerable salt has been extracted from pork and beans rid of strong taste, strain and wash in cold water. Return to fire to boil, together with pork, for another hour. When tender, add a tablespoonful of salt, a tablespoonful of sugar, and a half tablespoonful of paprika (or black pepper). When seasoning has become thoroughly mixed with beans, place in oven and cook until ready to serve.

## WELSH RAREBIT

*Morgan Robertson's Favorite Recipe*

Take one-half pound of rich New York State cream cheese, break into small pieces, and melt in same quantity of milk, to which add a flat tablespoonful of cornstarch as they mingle. Prepare toast. Add to cheese and milk one large tablespoonful of sap sago (or green cheese grated). When this mixture shows an indication of thickening add a tablespoonful of soda or saleratus. When these ingredients have been cooking for another minute pour over toasted bread and serve.

## WELSH RAREBIT

*Simple Formula*

For this recipe New York State cream cheese is best, which should be strong and old, but not too hard. Break into small pieces and melt in ale over fire; proportions being half a cup of ale to each half pound of cheese, with a saltspoonful of soda. Stir constantly while dissolving and when mixture has reached the proper consistency pour over toasted bread and serve.

Instead of cooking the higher seasonings in his rarebits, Mr. Robertson prepared a mixture of mustard and paprika as a side dish so that the condiment might be used as sparingly or plentifully as desired by each individual.

## HUNGARIAN GOULASH

Peel and slice one onion. Cook until brown in about three tablespoonsful of fat from salt pork. Take onion out and place in pot two pounds of lean beef, cut into one-inch pieces. Stir and cook the meat until slightly browned. If any fat is left discard. Place meat in agate dish. Add one pint of boiling water and one teaspoonful of paprika. Cover dish and place in oven. Add more fat to the frying-pan. When hot brown one dozen small potatoes (cut in balls) and an onion. When well browned add onion to meat. After onions and meat have been cooking one hour add a teaspoonful of salt and the potatoes.

## POT ROAST BEEF

Take three pounds of beef (preferably round). Cut a little fat away. Fry in an iron pot a few minutes on all sides. Cut gashes in beef and place in gashes small pieces of salt pork. Tie firmly. Season, cover tightly (previously shaking a little flour over it and adding enough hot water to half cover the beef). Add after one hour slices of carrot, cubes of turnip, if so desired. Add a little boiling water at intervals to prevent burning. Cook slowly for about three hours. Remove meat and vegetables to platter, add gravy and serve.

For gravy, have your flour mixed, ready to stir in juices of meat. Stir until quite smooth, and serve as above.

## GRAVY THICKENED

Remove meat and vegetables to platter. Add two tablespoonsful of flour to water and mix to a thin paste. Stir in juice of meat and cook slowly for three to five minutes, stirring slowly to prevent burning.

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